

The Alliance's Spartan

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Summary: The Great War has ended. Spartan S-989, Marcus, is one of the many Spartans now in service to the UNSC and it's allies. When he and his companion AI, Ariel, encounter an unknown installation they're ordered to investigate. When the installation hits them with an energy pulse, their slipspace generator malfunctions sending them further than they could ever imagine.

1. Chapter 1

**A/N: Hey guys thanks for reading. This here is my Halo X Mass Effect Crossover. I want people to know that I take a few liberties with the dialogue of the Mass Effect games. Any constructive criticisms are greatly appreciated. I'm always looking to expand my writing and I love to receive feedback. **

I do not own any characters or rights to either of the Halo or Mass Effect games nor do I claim to.

* * *

><p>2578 At an Unknown Installation **

"Ariel just tell me plainly, what the hell am I looking at?"

"Marcus. . . I have no idea."

Marcus raised an eyebrow at that. Ariel was a Class 4 'Smart A.I.' developed for cyber warfare and as a personal combat A.I. for him. Based on ancient Forerunner technology Ariel did not simply get stumped like this.

"Can you give me anything?" He asked.

"Only that whatever it is it, it's made of the same materials as the

Forerunner installation encountered by the Master Chief."

"I'm sensing a but."

"But," Ariel continued, "This is most defiantly not a Forerunner installation."

"How can you tell?" Marcus asked intrigued.

"For one thing the energy readings are off the charts." A graph appeared in front of his heads up display showing a multitude of different level of radiation. "And secondly there seems to be some sort of gravimetric anomaly at the center of the installation."

"What kind of gravimetric anomaly?"

Suddenly Ariel's avatar appeared before him. The small holographic emitter embedded in his MOLNIR Mk X armor projected her in front of him. He usually used the emitter to display topographical maps in front of him on the battle field, but sometimes Ariel used it to project herself. She had a beautifully angled face with sharp features. She wore a simple white dress one that reminded Marcus of his sister back home, many years ago, but her most striking feature was that she had chosen to portray herself with a pair of magnificent wings.

"Whatever it is it's throwing off all our scans, I can't even tell you how big the damn thing is because of the mass fluctuations." She said.

Marcus sighed. It wasn't the first time he would be performing an op with limited Intel it wouldn't be the last either. He turned and looked across the command bridge. Where normally seven different Spartans would sit were nothing but a bunch of empty chairs. The frigate Pride of Vengeance was one of the new class of UNSC Spartan support frigates. March 3, 2553 might have marked the end of the Great War, but the Jiralhanae had stubbornly refused to give up. Without the San 'Shyuum's leadership the Brutes devolved into their old clan structures, fighting amongst themselves and against humanity. Even thirty years later the Spartans were still the UNSC's best answer to the sheer physical might of the Jiralhanae.

Thirty years of reconstruction was not enough to completely erase all the scars of the Great War, but the UNSC had sure done its best. The UNSC fleet was now filled with larger and newer ships, new technologies taken from the Forerunner's gave rise to more powerful weapons, and with the Sangheili Civil War ended humanity now had some major allies.

The UNSC determined six years ago that it needed to give its Spartan team's greater tactical flexibility. The Pride of Vengeance and the other Keys Class Frigates were the result of that line of thinking. The Pride and the other support ships were advanced UNSC frigates that combined designs from both the Forerunners and the Covenant. The Pride was equipped with one of the new MAC-2 guns, the new design featured an over-under style barrel, rather than the traditional single barrel. Smaller in scale than the traditional MAC guns of the Great War the new MAC-2B's round only weighed in at three hundred sixty tons and each barrel fired three rounds at a time, and each

round impacted with the force of a ninety kiloton bomb. Each barrel had a sixty second recycling period if the shots were staggered that meant the Pride could put a devastating amount of fire power into space. She also featured a total of fourteen Archer Pod's split between both of her flanks, a pair of plasma torpedo tubes, and six plasma beam lances as her secondary weapons. She had a hanger bay that supported two drop ships, a pair of Warthogs, a Scorpion tank, and six HEV tubes for orbital insertion, most importantly an entire deck that was dedicated to care and maintenance of the Spartans and their armor. Protecting it all was nearly two meters of Titanium-A and Forerunner alloy along with latest version of energy shields the UNSC could provide. Combine that with the Forerunner cloaking device and the Pride of Vengeance was one of the toughest ships in the UNSC fleet. Armed and armored to the teeth the Pride could get in drop of her Spartans and get out before anyone had a clue.

The Pride is basically a frigate designed to run by a minimal crew, between the eight Spartans that were supposed to be stationed on board, the A.I. Ariel, and the hundred or so Huragok onboard the Pride had more than enough man power. The only problem was that right now Marcus was the only Spartan on board.

Spartan Team Witch Fire had recently engaged the Jiralhanae at New Harvest. In order to save the system they had used their old support frigate as a battering ram, slamming it into a Jiralhanae cruiser and firing the MAC gun at point black range. It wasn't exactly an elegant strategy but it had worked. The Spartans managed to evacuate, however Spartan 708 William also known as W-6 had stayed onboard to make sure that the MAC gun fired properly. Marcus was to join Witch Fire as a covert ops specialist, he was slated to replace their lost brother as W-6 and along the way he was to bring them their newly minted support frigate and A.I.

They had been in slipspace for several days when Ariel suddenly detected an anomaly in slipspace and had been forced to make an emergency transition. Advances in slipspace technology meant that Marcus didn't have to spend the trip frozen in cryo sleep. The installation if you could call it that was massive, as advanced as the Pride is, even for a frigate, she still only measures eight hundred meters in length, but this installation could easily have been over a hundred kilometers in length. Whatever the installation was doing to generate that gravimetric anomaly was powerful enough to distort slipspace which is what had caused Ariel to transition back to normal space.

Marcus had sent reports to HIGHCOM. They had responded by ordering him to use the Pride's sensors and gather as much information as possible and to send it back then continue on the New Harvest and join Witch Fire. A science team would be sent in later to investigate.

Marcus glanced at the data pad in his hand and reread HIGHCOM's orders, "Alright then, Ariel. Let's get this done."

"Yes Marcus." Ariel fired up the ship's engines and they began to approach the installation.

"Nice and easy Ariel. Let's take this slow." Marcus ordered.

"Yes, Spartan." As Ariel slowed their approach to the installation,

Marcus tried to make sense of what he was seeing. It was shaped like a giant tuning fork, the two arms made up at least three quarters of the structure's length. Where they joined there was some kind of energy field and it looked to be held in place by some spinning rings of some sort. Whatever the energy field was, it was so powerful he could see the distortions in space with his naked eye, it was almost neon blue.

"Are you getting anything?" He asked.

"Some." She replied "I think I can adjust our sensors to compensate for the distortions being caused, but if we want to get any relevant data we're going to have to get closer."

"Where are we now in relation to the object?"

"We are currently holding station at five hundred kilometers from the installation."

"And how close would we need to be in order for you to be able to pick anything up?"

"At least half that distance."

Marcus sighed "Alright Ariel bring us in closer, but make sure the shields are up before we move, if this thing's got any surprises I don't want to be caught with my pants down."

"Of course." She replied.

The Pride slowly began moving forward again almost inching its way closer to the massive construct. Suddenly warning claxon's began ringing out on the bridge.

"Marcus, We're being targeted!" Ariel shouted.

"Get us out of here now!"

Suddenly what looked like a bolt of blue lightning struck the Pride; her shields flared but held. "We're hit!"

On the bridge terminals shorted and exploded as power surged through the ship. The main terminal in front of Marcus suddenly blew up pelting him with shrapnel. If he hadn't been wearing his MOLNIR armor he would have been cut to ribbons. "Ariel!" He shouted.

"Attempting to compensate through non critical systems!"

"Deploy a beacon! We have to warn the UNSC to stay way!"

"Launching. We have a problem Marcus."

"What's wrong?"

"The power surge is feeding energy directly into the slipspace capacitors. The slipspace generator's powering up and I have no way to control it! Without slipspace calculations there's no way to tell where we'll end up!"

"Is there any way to divert the power?"

"All the systems are overloading! There's nowhere for the power to go."

"Then I guess I better strap in." Marcus dashed to a crash seat and slammed himself down. A pair of bars came down over him and locked him in place.

"The wave form is generating. Hang on Marcus! This is going to be rough!"

* * *

><p>March 3, 2187 Exodus Cluster Utopia
System**_

"Marcus!"

Marcus's head snapped up. "What happened?" Whatever had happened to the Pride had knocked him out cold. He tasted copper in his mouth.

"We experienced some form of acceleration shift and the inertial compensators couldn't keep up. You experienced almost twenty gees for a period of five point three two minutes."

Marcus's mind reeled, "What about the Huragok?" The Huragok engineers were essential to the function of the ship. He had made it through the acceleration shift mostly because of his MOLNIR armor and his augments.

Ariel's tone took on a somber note, "Thirty-two didn't survive. A number of the others have been injured to various degrees. I've ordered those still alive and in good health to help the injured and to take care of their dead."

Marcus hung his head. The Huragok were simple and uncomplicated, if you had their trust they would do whatever it is you asked of them, even if it meant their death, but to have so many die without cause saddened him. "What caused the acceleration shift?"

"Unknown. You know I really hate not knowing anything. Today is just not my day."

Marcus smiled, "You're doing fine Ariel. Where are we?"

"Scanning. We exited slipspace in an unknown class G system with five planets. One of the planets seems habitable. Aside from that there's not much else I can tell you. I can't seem to find any known UNSC constellations."

Marcus thought for a moment. "What's the ship status?" He asked for a moment as he got out of the crash seat.

"That I can answer for you. The power surge blew circuits and terminals all over the ship. The weapon systems, shields, and reactors are all down. Engines are at fifteen percent. What power we do have right now are the emergency back-ups for life support. The Shaw-Fujikawa generator seems to be mostly intact, but the capacitors that allow the formation of the waveform are all blown there's no way

we can go to slipspace until we can repair them. Most of the external systems are down and it seems there might be some damage to the port side plasma torpedo launcher. I won't know more until the Huragok can investigate."

"What about the Forerunner cloaking system?"

"There's some good news. That's the only system I'm showing one hundred percent functionality."

"Good get the Huragok started on the generators and life support. As soon as we have power cloak the ship I don't want anyone sneaking up on us. In the meantime I'm heading down to medical to get checked out. Alert me as soon as you find anything."

"Affirmative."

* * *

><p>"Marcus."<p>

"Yes Ariel." Marcus's eyes opened as soon as he heard the A.I. call.

"I have something you need to see."

"I'll look at it in the opps room. Give me a moment."

"Of course. See you there."

Ariel's form faded from view as Marcus stood up. Apparently the acceleration shift that he had experienced had been a little harder on him than he had thought. He had been put under to have some internal bleeding stopped. As he stood, he stretched to make sure everything was alright and that nothing would inhibit his movement.

When he entered the opps room he saw Ariel standing next to holo projector. She turned and looked at him and smiled as she looked at him. "Good to see you up." She said.

"Good to be up. Give me an update on the ship status."

"Luckily the reactors weren't that badly damaged. Their control systems were fried like everything else on board the ship, but their built-in safeties auto shutdown the reactors to prevent a meltdown. Those are parts we keep on hand in case of catastrophic damage, the Huragok should have them replaced momentarily." As she finished a faint hum reverberated throughout the ship. The emergency lights flicked off as main power was restored. "Engaging the cloak field."

"Good. What was it you wanted to show me?"

"This." She turned and looked at the holo projector as it came to life. "I just managed to pick up this distress signal."

Human soldiers were fighting, against what he couldn't tell. It must be a helmet cam based on the view. Suddenly a Gunny Sergeant ran up and pushed the helmet down.

"Get down!" she yelled. She turned and fired off a couple of rounds before ducking behind cover.

The camera panned around. Marcus saw fire from what looked like some form of directed energy weapon. Suddenly a corporal ran up to the camera.

"We are under attack. We are taking heavy casualties! I repeat taking heavy casualties! We can't . . . argh! â€"eed evac. They came out of nowhere! We need â€"!" The corporal slumped forward with a blank look on his face having been shot in the back.

Suddenly a loud buzzing cut off all other sound. The soldier on the holo suddenly glanced up, a look of shock and terror on his face. Off in the distance was a massive vessel, it had smooth organic lines, similar to Covenant design. Only where Covenant ships looked like a wale this looked more like a cephalopod.

Suddenly the signal turned to static. "There's nothing else. Everything just cut's out. There's some kind of jamming signal blocking communications."

"Those weren't UNSC personnel, they weren't wearing standard issue UNSC equipment." Marcus stated.

"No they weren't." Ariel agreed. "Those weren't plasma discharges either, which means it's probably not the Covenant, also the signal was devoid of all standard UNSC protocols. Whoever's down there they're not UNSC and we don't know who they're fighting."

"Where did the signal originate from?"

"The second planet in this system, where there seems to be a sizable colony. I would have spotted it sooner if the ship weren't half blind and deaf."

"Are there any other ships in the system?"

"As far as I can tell, no. We're all that's here."

"Prep a pelican I'm going down."

"Can't Spartan, the Pelicans are fine they came through our transition alright, but the launch rails that move them into position are all fried. We can open the hanger doors but it does us little good if we can't get the birds lined up."

"What about the HEV pods? Can we do an orbital insertion?"

"That's a no go too. The pods' internal computers are scrambled without them you'd hit the surface at terminal velocity, Not even you can survive that. Unless you plan on jumping out the air lock there's no way we can get to the surface."

Ariel saw Marcus's head pick up at her last comment. He turned to look at her with a sly grin spread across his face.

"Oh no. You're crazy you know that?" She said.

"No I just get bored easily, besides I'm a Spartan." He said simply.

"Go get suited up, and head to the hanger. I need to have the Huragok modify a couple pieces of equipment before you can jump."

* * *

><p>Alex Shepard stood on the bridge of the Normandy listening to the two soldiers in front of her talk.<p>

"I hate that guy."

"Nihlus gave you a compliment, so you hate him?" Kaiden raised his eyebrow at Joker.

"You remember to zip up your jump suit coming out of the bathroom, that's good. I just jumped us halfway across the galaxy and hit a target the size of pinhead, so that's incredible." Joker retorted, "Besides Specters are trouble, I don't like having him on board. Call me paranoid."

"You're paranoid. The council helped fund this project they have a right to send someone to check on their investment."

"Yeah. That is the official story." You could practically see the quotation marks the sarcasm was so thick. "But only an idiot believes the official story."

Kaiden raised an eyebrow. "What do you think commander?"

Alex thought for a moment. She had been told the same thing about the Council Specter as everyone else, she had no reason to doubt Nihlus or Captain Anderson, but something in her gut told her otherwise. Ever since Akuze she learned to trust her gut. "You don't send Specters on shake-down runs." She finally agreed.

"Joker status report." Anderson called over the com.

"Just cleared the mass relay captain."

"Good. Find a com buoy and link us into the network. I want reports relayed back to Alliance brass before we reach Eden Prime."

"Aye, aye Sir. Better brace yourself sir. I think Nihlus is heading your way."

The captain's voice suddenly became serious, "He's already here, Lieutenant. Tell the Commander to meet me in the com room for a debriefing." With that the Captain cut the com.

"You get that Commander?" He asked looking over his shoulder.

"Great. You piss the Captain off and I'm the one who has to deal with him."

"Don't blame me he's always like that." Joker defended.

"Only when he's talking to you, Joker." Kaiden retorted.

Alex turned and began walking to the CIC. She couldn't help but marvel at the Normandy. She was the most advanced ship in the Alliance Fleet. The first ever ship to incorporate both human and Turian designs. The Normandy was fast, agile, and almost impossible to detect, just the way Shepard like to operate.

The CIC was a bustle of activity. She could see Navigator Presley hard at work at his terminal. He was always the serious one. As she continued to make her way back to the com room she could see Jenkins talking with Dr. Chakwas. As she passed she could hear snippets of their conversation.

"I hope we get deployed soon." She heard Jenkins say. Shepard frowned at that. If she didn't have to meet the Captain in the com room she would have stopped and talked to him about that. Jenkins was young and eager which isn't a bad thing, but being reckless can get you and your teammates killed. She resolved to do that as soon as possible.

As Shepard entered the com room she saw Nihlus standing there alone, a picture of Eden Prime was displayed before him on the holo terminal. He turned as she entered.

"Ah Commander I was hoping you'd get here first, it'll give us a chance to talk." The sub vocals in his voice gave nothing away.

"What about?" She asked.

"I'm interested in this world we're going to, Eden Prime. I've head it's quite beautiful."

"I've never been there." Shepard admitted. She had grown up on Earth, she had never seen nor set foot on another planet until she had joined the Alliance.

"But you know of it." He insisted, "It's become something of a symbol of your people hasn't it? Proof that humanity can not only establish colonies across the galaxy but also protect them, but how safe is it really?"

Something was off about Nihlus's comment. "Is there something you need to tell me?" she asked.

That's when the captain came in. "I think it's time we told the Commander what's really going on."

Nihlus nodded his agreement, "This mission is far more than a simple shake-down run."

"I already figured that out."

The Captain smiled inwardly at Shepard, Can't fool her, he thought. "We're making a covert pickup on Eden Prime. That's why we needed the stealth systems operational."

"There must be a reason you didn't tell me sir."

The Captain nodded. "This comes straight from the top, information on

a strictly need-to know basis. A research team on Eden Prime uncovered some kind of beacon. It was Prothean."

Shepard's eyes widened in understanding. The Prothean's were a hyper advanced race that existed fifty thousand years ago. The last store of Prothean knowledge that humanity had discovered had jumped their technology forward two hundred years.

"Obviously this goes beyond mere human interests' commander, this could affect every species in council space." Nihlus said.

Shepard nodded her understanding, "Something tells me that not the only reason you're here though."

Nihlus smiled, or at least he did what Turains called a smile," That's correct Commander, I'm also hear to evaluate you. I've read the reports about you. N7 commendation top of your class, a brilliant technical expert and sniper, and also the only one of your unit to survive Akuze. The Specters can use someone like you, which is why I put your name forward as a candidate."

Shepard raised an eyebrow at that last comment, "You put my name forward?"

"That's right commander. I don't care that you're human, I only care that you can get the job done."

Shepard smiled at that. It was refreshing to meet a turian that was willing to be practical. "I assume the Alliance is alright with this sir?" She asked looking at Anderson.

"The Alliance needs this, Commander. We want a bigger role in shaping interstellar policy. We want more say with the Citadel Council. The Specters represent the Council's power and authority. If they accept a human into their ranks, it'll show how far humanity has come."

Shepard looked at Nihlus, "What do I need to do."

"Eden Prime will be the first of several missions together. I need to see your skills for myself commander."

Anderson nodded "You'll be in charge of the ground team. Nihlus will accompany you. Secure the beacon and get it onto the ship ASAP."

"Understood Captain."

"Anderson nodded, "We should be-."

"Captain!"

Anderson frowned. Joker may get under his skin but he would never interrupt the captain during debriefing unless it was necessary. "What's wrong Joker?"

"Emergency transmission from Eden Prime, sir. You're going to want to see this."

"On screen."

What followed was the same transmission that Marcus had seen a few moments earlier. When the massive ship was shown Alex felt her gut clench at the sight, whatever it was made her uneasy. Suddenly the feed went dead.

"Everything cut's out after that no more traffic at all."

The captain narrowed his eyes. "Reverse and hold at thirty eight point five." The monstrous ship once again appeared on the display. In a rare sign of agitation Nihlus clacked his mandibles together.

"Status report Joker."

"We're seventeen minutes out and I'm not reading any other ships in the area."

"Alright Joker. Take us in fast and quiet." Anderson looked over at Nihlus. "This mission just got a lot more complicated."

"A small strike team can move quickly. It'll be our best chance to secure the beacon."

"Agreed. Commander tell Alenko and Jenkins to suit up. You're going in."

2. Chapter 2

"Are you sure you want to do this?" Ariel asked.

Marcus sighed, "There are human colonists down there being attacked by an unknown enemy."

"Just wanted to make sure. You're going to need this Spartan." Marcus looked over and took the device that the Huragok held out to him. It looked like an overshield module attached to a bubble shield. "The bubble shield alone won't protect you from the heat of reentry. It simply doesn't have the endurance, but thanks to Weight of Knowledge here we were able to modify it, and attach it to the power supply of the overshield emitter. With some tweaking it should be able to last you through the upper atmosphere."

"Good job Ariel." Marcus strapped the device to his chest where it would be out of the way. He was wearing his Mk X Rouge Infiltration. It came standard with a stealth cloak and maneuvering jets. On his back he had the atmospheric jump jets with an extra-large fuel canister attached, if he was going to have any hope of landing softly he was going to need it.

With all the extra gear required for the jump, he could only carry a few weapons. He elected for the MA5X Assault Rifle, its predecessor the MA5B was the standard issue weapon during the Great War, the new MA5X was similar in design, but instead of the original gas propellant used in the 5B the 5X instead operated with the gauss acceleration system. Each clip now held sixty-four tungsten carbide rounds with a depleted uranium core. His secondary weapon of choice was the plasma pistol. The new Covenant design allowed their troops to carry extra power cells for their plasma weapons which meant that

their troops could now reload their weapons at will.

The other two weapons he had were non-optional. Marcus's first tour as a Spartan had placed him in a mixed company of Marines and Sangheili. During the deployment Marcus had spent time with a couple of their sword masters. At the end of the deployment he had been challenged by three of the Sangheili swordsmen to a duel. When he won he was awarded a pair of the Covenant energy swords and was given the title of sword master. As a matter of honor the Sangheili required him to take his swords with him whenever he went into battle.

Once the UNSC brass learned how good he was with the damned things they relented and allowed him to take them with him. Throw in a couple of grenades for good measure and Marcus was carrying enough firepower to rival a squad of ODST's.

"Alright Ariel. You ready?" He asked.

"As ready as I'll ever be."

"Just remember you're not the one doing the flying."

"Except if you burn up I go with you."

"I figured that was proper incentive to make sure that this contraption of yours works."

"Oh it'll work."

"Then you have nothing to worry about." Marcus smiled as Ariel made a "humph" sound.

"The ship is in position Marcus. Provided everything goes as planned you should be landing somewhere near the outer edges of the colony."

"Alright then here we go."

Suddenly the hanger doors snapped open and he was sucked out into space. He oriented himself so that he was facing the planet as he fell. It wasn't long before he began to skim the upper atmosphere, his shields flared as the heat of reentry began to build up.

"Marcus now might be a good time to hit that bubble shield." At Ariel's warning Marcus activated the bubble shield. Normally transparent, this bubble shield was a solid lay of golden light, cutting off his view of the planet.

"You alright?" She asked.

"I'm fine."

"Really? Because you knowâ€¦ most people feel a little nervous at falling through a planet's atmosphere in an uncontrolled decent."

"Don't worry we'll make it." Ariel would have smiled at Marcus' words if she'd had a body, even a holographic one. That's why she so enjoyed working with Marcus, no matter how bad things got he never gave in. He never accepted defeat. He would always fight, and he

would sacrifice anything if it meant saving the life of another. It was a pleasure and an honor to be paired with him. Even here with so many unknowns, he was willing to leap feet first into the fire to save people he'd never met, like he said earlier, he was a Spartan to the core.

"Of course we will." She said.

The rest of Marcus' descent was spent in silence. The modified bubble shield held thorough reentry, when it deactivated he found himself in a cloud layer. Moisture collected on his visor as he passed through the fog.

"Alright Marcus. This could get a bit tricky. When this timer reaches zero you need to activate the jump pack. You should have enough fuel to slow you down enough so that when you do make impact it won't kill you."

"Should?" He asked.

"Don't worry. I did my homework, you'll be fine."

Marcus watched as the timer clicked down. Time seemed to crawl as he inadvertently entered Spartan Time, a state of heightened awareness and reflexes to Spartans it seemed as though time was passing at a slower rate.

When the timer reached zero he mashed down on the accelerator as hard as he could. His body jerked as he slammed into the harness of his pack. He was still falling fast. The ground came up to meet him. He was going to hit the ground too fast.

"Ariel!"

"Initiating Armor Lock."

Suddenly Marcus's armor tensed up around him, making it impossible to move. This is going to hurt, he thought. He slammed into the ground bouncing as he went, like a rock skipping across a pond. He struck a rocky outcropping and blasted through with enough force to turn the boulder into gravel, shields flaring. When he finally came to a stop he had carved a track almost half a kilometer long. He checked his equipment. His weapons and armor had made it through alright, but the jump jets had been ripped off him at some point during his landing.

"That hurt." He admitted.

"Wow I can't believe that actually worked!"

"Wait. WHAT?" Marcus yelled.

"Kidding. I knew you'd make it. Now get up Spartan. You've got a colony to save."

He sat up pulling his MA5X assault rifle as he did so
"Affirmative."

"Alright team. Let's move out." Alex led her three man fire team away from the drop point. The Normandy's engines roared as the ship flew

away. She motioned for Jenkins to take point as they began to make their way to the colony. They hadn't gotten very far before Captain Anderson's voice cut in over the com.

"Shepard."

Shepard motioned for the team to take cover while she talked for the captain, "What is it captain?"

"Just wanted to let you know, we got something on scanners that hit the ground not too far from your position. Whatever it is it originated somewhere in orbit and sense there're no asteroids in this system, chances are whatever it is it's artificial. Keep your eyes open."

"Roger that Captain. You get that Nihlus?"

"Copy that Shepard." The turian answered.

"Anderson out."

"Let's keep moving people." Alex waved Jenkins forward to resume point. He grinned at her and leapt from cover. He was too excited, Shepard should have made time to talk to him before the mission. Suddenly a squad of drones came out of nowhere firing on Jenkins. He hit the ground hard.

Ashley knew she was screwed. For the past hour she had played a losing game of cat and mouse with these damn drones. Somehow she had managed to stay a few steps ahead of them since she and her unit had gotten ambushed, but this time it seems that her luck had run out.

Ashley cursed under her breath as she felt the impact from the drone's mass accelerator weapons on her barriers. Another shot struck her sending her tumbling to the ground. She pulled her side arm as she fell. _You can do this Ash, just like in training,_ she said to herself as she sighted down her pistol. She squeezed off a pair of shots and the two drones exploded, pelting her with debris and shrapnel.

Everything hurt on Marcus. Nothing had been broken during his landing, but he had defiantly torn something. His left arm responded sluggishly to his will and both of his legs felt as though his nerve endings were on fire. Then he heard small arms fire up ahead and took off.

Marcus could see the Gunny Sergeant he had seen in the distress call. She was wearing that form fitting armor that was so different from his. She tumbled to the ground firing as she went taking out both of her attackers. _She's good._ He thought. It was then that both soldiers, Spartan and Marine, noticed the synthetics.

There were a pair of them, they were holding a struggling man over some kind of device. Suddenly a massive spike erupted from the device impaling the man. Marcus felt his blood run cold. Not even the Covenant had been this bad.

He took off, all pain forgotten. He didn't care what these things were, if they were willing to do that to their victims then they

deserved no mercy from him. He fired his assault rifle as he sprinted off.

Ashley knew she was dead. She had killed the drones, but she knew there was no way she was going to be able to outrun the two synthetics in front of her. She could feel herself slowing down, it would only be a matter of time before they caught her. Then she saw a pile of rocks to her right, now was as good a place as any to make a stand, who knows she might even get lucky. That's when she saw the blue and white blur speed past her, firing as it went.

As Marcus fired he could see the shields of his first target flare. He kept pouring his fire into the same target. He could remember the words of his old teacher Captain Mendez.

"_In situations where you don't know the strength of your enemy, being quick and aggressive can keep your opponent off balance, don't give them the chance to recover. Be ruthless!" _

Marcus focused on being ruthless, just like Mendez taught him. He emptied almost half a clip into the first target before its shields dropped. His bullets riddled it with holes soon after turning it into a pile of sparks and hydraulic fluid.

The two targets hadn't even been able to fire a single shot yet before he took down the first. His charge had brought him in close with the second, it raised its weapon in an attempt to get a bead on him. Marcus threw his rifle up and over his shoulder the magnetic plates there automatically grabbing it and holding it in place.

He slapped the things rifle to the side just as it squeezed the trigger, sending the shots wide. His fist shot out quick as lightning slamming into the thing's single glowing eye. The thing clicked and growled at him as his fist struck again this time in the thing's chest plate. Metal splintered under his fist as he sent the thing flying backwards into the rock face. Marcus calmly pulled his pistol from its holster and put two rounds into its chest. The plasma seared right through turning the thing into a pile of useless slag.

"Holy shit." Marcus turned to see the gunnery sergeant looking at him. She was standing next to the rocks she had taken cover behind.

"You alright ma'am?" He asked.

"Yeah. I am now. Thanks. Who are you?"

Suddenly Marcus's motion tracker pinged a target off to his right. He was still had a lot of adrenaline coursing through his system after the short fight, he reacted instantly pushing the Sergeant back behind cover. Blind firing his pistol as he did so.

"Marcus, wait!" Ariel called, but it was too late.

Alex had to put Jenkins behind her. She hated losing people, but as unfortunate as it was it came with the territory, that's what being an N7 meant, it meant sacrificing people if it was necessary. God she hated losing people.

She and Kaiden crested a hill. They were still making their way to the colony in an attempt to reach the beacon. She saw two soldiers standing off in the distance. One was an alliance marine the other she didn't recognize.

He was massive, he had to be close to seven feet tall. The armor he was wearing wasn't standard Alliance issue that was for sure. Suddenly the big man moved, almost too fast for her to see. He pushed the gunnery Sergeant behind a pile of rocks. He raised an odd looking pistol in her direction as he did so.

Alex dove and tackled Kaiden to the ground as a pair of green bolts flashed not too far from where her head had been.

"Alliance marines stand down!" She called, and just like that the rounds stopped as soon as they came.

She and Kaiden picked themselves up and trotted down the hill. The marine and the other soldier were standing side by side at the bottom. The unknown soldier still had that odd looking weapon in his hand, but he had it pointed down to the ground in an attempt to not look threatening. An attempt he failed.

"Apologies ma'am. My motion tracker picked you up as you came over the hill but it didn't register your IFF for some reason. I should have been more careful." The big man said as he popped a parade ground salute. The woman at his side following suit.

Alex didn't know what to make of the man in the armor, normally when people shot at her she answered in kind, it was odd having someone shoot at her one moment the salute her the next.

"Just make sure it doesn't happen again." She replied giving her own salute. The two in front of her relaxed. "I'm Commander Shepard."

"Gunnery Chief Ashley Williams of the two twelve." The woman in white answered. Alex recognized her from the distress call that she had seen less than an hour ago.

"Petty officer Marcus Sierra-989." The big man said.

"What's the sierra stand for Marcus?"

"Spartan ma'am."

"Is that some kind of spec opps group?" She asked.

Marcus' mind reeled at her question. How could she not know who the Spartan's where? He supposed that if this was some long lost human colony, it could conceivably make sense that she hadn't heard of the Spartan's, but in order for that to be true Marcus would have had to travel very far indeed in his slipspace jump. If so he decided to err on the side of caution.

"That's classified ma'am. What I can tell you is I'm human and I'm able to help."

Alex raised an eyebrow at Marcus' answer. She was an N7, more than that she held almost all the records for marksmanship and

infiltration a marine could have in the Alliance. If there was some type of secret spec opps group in the Alliance she would have known about it, more than that she would have been a part of it.

She tried to read the man in front of her, but there was nothing she could get. His posture was military to the bone there was nothing she could get from that, and his face was covered in a gold reflective visor. She wasn't happy with his response, but given the circumstances she couldn't really afford to be picky.

"Fair enough." She turned to Ashley, "Give me a status report Williams."

The sergeant's shoulders slumped, "Oh man where do I begin? We were patrolling the out skirts of the colony when the attack hit. We were ambushed, I'm. . . I'm the only one who made it. I've been running for my life ever since, I would have been killed for sure if Marcus hadn't shown up."

"What are these thing's anyway?" Kaiden asked.

"I think they're Geth." Ashley answered.

"That's impossible. The Geth haven't been seen outside the Veil in nearly three hundred years why would they show themselves now?"
Three hundred years? The only alien species that humanity had ever come in contact with had been the Covenant and that had only occurred less than sixty years ago, let alone three hundred.

Ashley shrugged at the Lieutenants question, "They must be here for the beacon."

"Beacon?" Marcus asked.

Ashley and Shepard both looked at him, "That's right." The Commander explained, "A group of scientists discovered a beacon not that long ago here, it's Prothean. There's no telling what kind of information might be contained with in." She looked back at Ashley, "We need that beacon Ashley, you're both coming with us."

"Affirmative." Marcus said.

"You got it Commander, the dig site's not that far. Time for payback." Marcus couldn't help but grin at the Sergeant's comment.
She's defiantly good. He thought.

As the team moved out, Marcus clicked his external speakers off.
"Ariel, what have you got?"

"Each one of them seems to have some sort of personal data storage device attached to their waist. I'm attempting to initiate handshake protocols with them to gain access. As soon as I have something I'll let you know."

"Keep on it. I don't know these people, and it seems they've never heard of the Covenant before, I want to know why."

"The dig site should be just up ahead." Ashley continued.

"Alright, Marcus. You're on point."

"Yes ma'am."

3. Chapter 3

Alex led her now four man fire team. She didn't know what to make of Marcus, she'd never heard of a Spartan before.

"Marcus I think I've got something."

"What is it Ariel?"

"I managed to hack into the commander's data storage unit. I've got basic information only however. This tech is a little unfamiliar and I don't want to run the risk of alerting her by accessing her personal files. Apparently these 'Geth' are some form of artificial constructs. They're not true A.I.'s but they're close enough. Three hundred years ago they gained self-awareness and fought a war against their creators, a species called the Quarrians."

"Wait a minute. So now we have two new species that the UNSC's never heard about? What's going on here Ariel?"

"I was just getting to that Marcus, I don't think the UNSC exists anymore, that or it never existed in the first place. I've searched all the data I can, there is no record of Earth ever founding the UNSC or even the Covenant War for that matter."

"How can that be possible?"

"I have some theories about that, I'll explain them whenever we get a chance." At that moment Marcus' motion tracker pigged again. He knew they weren't marines, after Ariel had gained access to the commander's data storage unit she identified the frequency their IFF's operated on. The Commander the two other soldiers now appeared as yellow dots on his motion tracker, the targets in front of him were vibrant red.

"Commander. We've got Geth in front of us." He called.

"Wait one." She replied. Alex and the other marines advanced up to Marcus he had taken cover near a pile of rocks.

"This is the dig site." Ashley said. There were twelve Geth. Two of them were crouched down, they seemed to be looking at something. The other ten were pulling security for the two on the ground.

"Right. Ok people. Marcus you take the left flank and draw their fire. Ashley I want you on the right with Kaiden. I'll set up hear and support you. Understood." Confirmation for her orders came from everyone. She nodded at her people and pulled her sniper rifle from her back. "Alright people. MOVE!"

Marcus sprinted from cover, firing as he went. He wasn't looking for the kill, his goal was to draw as much attention as possible from his teammates. Luckily, the MA5X, while powerful, excelled at making noise.

As soon as he fired the first shot, every Geth in the area turned to

look at him. He emptied his already depleted clip, rather than reload he ejected the spent magazine and quickly grabbed his pistol, a decision which saved him a few milliseconds. His shields fared as he took several direct hits.

He slid behind cover, and checked the status on his shield bar. He had barley lost ten percent of his shield strength. If the Geth weapons had been plasma based he might have been worried, instead all he did was smile.

"Well this should be easy." Ariel commented.

Marcus glanced around cover, he had done a good job attracting fire, but with a dozen hostiles it was easy for the Geth to split their fire between himself and the others. He could see Kaiden and Ashley taking fire, he raised his plasma pistol and fired a couple of shots before ducking behind cover. One of the Geth was destroyed instantly and the other looked as though it had lost the use of its right arm. It took two more steps towards Kaiden and Ashley before its head exploded in a shower of sparks as Alex finished it off.

Kaiden's biotics were useless until the Geth's shields were down, he could see the effectiveness Marcus' riffle. "Marcus." He commed, "Switch back to that rifle of yours. If you can take out their shields I can finish them off."

"Understood."

Sure enough the growl of Marcus' odd assault rifle filled the dig site. Kaiden focused and reached deep down. Biotics were a misunderstood science at best, even he didn't fully understand how he did the things he did. He couldn't explain it to a non-biotic, and each biotic he had ever met experienced it differently. He felt the dark energy build inside of him, and released it toward his enemy.

Marcus saw Kaiden begin to glow blue. It reminded him of the effect he had seen at the installation. Suddenly Kaiden stood up, and punched his fist out, and the Geth that Marcus had been firing at were suddenly picked up and were floating in midair.

Taking advantage of the sudden turn of events, Marcus pulled his pistol again and fired. Soon four more Geth were down. With the four team members working together they soon finished off the remaining Geth.

"Hell yeah!" Ashley yelled.

"All target's down." Kaiden confirmed.

The four soldiers entered the dig site. "The beacon was right here." Ashley said, "It must have been moved."

"Where would it have been moved?" Alex asked.

"No idea Commander. Let's check up at the camp site. We might be able to learn something there. It's just up this ridge."

The team moved out with Marcus once again at point. Just like Ashley said the camp site wasn't that far. There were more of those devices

scattered throughout the camp. Atop each one was another body. Something about the layout set Marcus' nerves on edge.

"Keep your guard up. It's a good place for an ambush." Kaiden said voicing Marcus' thoughts.

Suddenly one of the spikes descended. The body that had been impaled on top of it pulled itself free with a sickening pop. Marcus didn't waste any time in firing. It might have been human once, but it defiantly wasn't now.

"Oh God, they're still alive!"

It didn't have any weapons, but its shields were resilient as hell. It finally stumbled and fell at Marcus' feet when three more spikes lowered. The ammo reader on his riffle read zero. Time for a different tactic. Marcus dropped his riffle and instead drew his plasma swords.

He fired his maneuvering jets and closed in with the husks. He trusted forward with his right hand catching the lead husk in the chest. His plasma sword pierced through its chest, the light in its eye's flickered and died almost instantly. Turning the blade sideways he spun bringing up his second sword splitting the second husk in half. The third husk ran up to him, but before he could get to it, it emitted some kind of energy pulse, which knocked out his shields completely. His foot snapped up sending the thing flying. Shepard and the rest of the team finished it off with a sustained burst from their riffles.

"What the hell are those?" Alex asked. Nodding to his swords.

"Plasma swords." He said simply.

"How can I get some of those?" Ashley asked.

"Yeah no kidding, talk about effective." Kaiden raised an eyebrow.

Marcus wondered how to answer in the end he just gave them the truth, "You have to train every day for two years, then you have to survive a three on one fight against other sword masters. If you're still standing afterwards you are awarded a sword of your own."

Alex gave him an odd look. "What are these things?" She asked nudging one with her boot.

"They look like some kind of husk. All their internals have been removed and replaced with cybernetics." Marcus knelt down next to one of the corpses and stuck his hand in to the things chest and grabbed what might have once been its heart.

"I'm going to be sick." Ashley said, looking pale.

"It seems the heart was replace with some kind of energy cell." Marcus, continued, "Whatever these things are don't let them get to close, that energy pulse completely knocked out my shields."

Alex nodded, "Alright people spread out and search the camp for

survivors, but keep your eyes open."

The team moved out it wasn't long before they found Doctor-. She and her assistant had taken shelter in one of the labs, locking the door behind them. Marcus chose to stay outside on over watch while the Commander questioned the civilians.

"Alright Ariel what can you tell me?"

"Nothing good Marcus. I've been going through the Commander's data storage device, they call it and Omni-Tool by the way, and things aren't looking good. According the local calendar the year is 2176."

Marcus was practically floored by what Ariel said, "How is that possible?"

"That's just it Marcus, it's not. They have records of Earth, records that don't match up with the data I have stored up in the _Pride_." Ariel went on for five minutes giving Marcus a brief rundown on the Alliance and this seemingly new Earth, the Mass Relay's, and the Council. The UNSC was never formed, the tension with the colonies hasn't happened yet, in fact the colonies were only just getting started, and as far as Ariel could tell, the Covenant, the Forerunners, and the Flood, never existed.

"You said you had some theories?" Marcus asked.

"Yes their technology seems to revolve around mass acceleration drives. Their weapons, ships drives, everything seems to be based on the principle of Mass effect fields. Near as I can tell they utilize some kind of dark matter that they call Element Zero when it reacts it creates a gravimetric field that warps space-time around it. While in these fields an object can be accelerated many times the speed of light, and because of the pocket of warped space-time they're able to just laugh at Isaac Newton."

"Okay, but that still doesn't explain how we got here."

"I'm getting to that. The slipspace drive operates by tearing a hole into subspace, in which the laws of physics operate differently than normal space. These Element Zero reactors give off the same gravimetric anomalies we encountered at the installation onboard the _Pride_. With these anomalies strong enough to warp slipspace, couple that with the runaway power surge and the opening of a slipspace portal with no exit calculations, it's possible that when we exited slipspace we tore a hole into an alternate universe."

Marcus was silent for a moment, "Are you sure?"

"It's the only theory that makes any sense."

"Alright then. So how do we get back?"

"I don't think we can. Even after the _Pride's been_ completely repaired there's no way to recreate the effect that brought us here. Sure we can go up next to a Mass Relay and open a slipspace waveform, but there's no way to calculate the exit coordinates, I wouldn't even know where to start."

It was at that time the Commander and the rest of the team returned. "Alright the doc says that the beacon was moved up to the Tram station just ahead for transport, so that's where we're heading." Alex said. "Ashley, you and I are in the lead. Kaiden, Spartan watch our six."

"Yes ma'am."

"Understood." Kaiden and Marcus answered at the same time. Marcus put Ariel's words behind him, it was time to get back to work.

"Lieutenant what's going to happen to the colony after this, I get why we need the beacon, but what about the civilians?"

"The Alliance is gathering a fleet to secure the system, from what I understand Admiral Hackett will be taking charge directly. With him and the Sixth Fleet here, the Geth won't stand a chance. The colony just needs to hold out until they get here. What about you, how'd you end up here? We didn't pick up any other ships in the area when we came in."

"Something happened to the ship before the attack hit, knocked out most of our major systems. When the distress call came in, we barely had enough power to maneuver the ship for an orbital insertion. Right now it's running on minimal life support and that's about it." Marcus didn't like lying to the Lieutenant, but until he knew more about what was going on he decided that he was going to keep quiet about a few things.

"If that's true then why would you risk your ship and crewmates to come down here? Seems like an awfully big risk."

Marcus looked at the Lieutenant. More than anything else those words sunk home just how different things were here compared to back home, "Because sir. It's what we do."

Kaiden could tell that he had upset the Spartan somehow. The fire team made their way to the tram station. As they got to the top of the hill they could see something off in the distance taking off. It turned out to be the strange ship they had seen in the distress call.

"My God! What is that?"

"It's a ship look at the size of it!" Kaiden and Ashley were both standing mouths open in shock.

After the team pulled themselves together, they continued on. Soon they reached the tram station. There were half a dozen Geth patrolling the area and at least twice that many husks.

"Ugh! I hate those things." Ashley whispered.

"How do you want to do this sir?" Kaiden asked looking at the Commander.

Alex thought for a moment. Her team had the high ground, but there was very little cover between her and the station. If the Geth got into cover quickly her team would be in a firefight, one in which

they were outnumbered and surrounded. Then Marcus spoke up.

"Commander there's a body down there, it's not human and it's not Geth." he said.

4. Chapter 4

She pulled her sniper rifle and used its scope to check. "It's Nihlus." She cursed. "Alright, Marcus you're on crowd control, keep those Husk's off us, Kaiden you help him. Ashley, you and I focus on the Geth. MOVE PEOPLE!"

The team sprinted to cover firing as they went. Marcus pulled and primed a plasma grenade, and threw it at a crowd of Husks, hoping the EMP generated would fry their cybernetics. The results were devastating. Three Husks were torn apart in the explosion and six others just dropped were they stood. He pulled his plasma pistol just as he and Kaiden slid into a pile of rocks for cover. Between the two of them they quickly made short work of the remaining husks.

Alex and Ashley, buy unspoken consent, focused their fire on the few Geth that were out in the open with no cover nearby for them to hide behind. Ashley fired her riffle in quick controlled bursts as she ran for cover. Her tight groupings quickly brought down the shields of two Geth. Alex followed up with two perfect headshots, their coordinated fire matching perfectly like they had done this a thousand times before.

As the rest of the Geth ducked to cover, the two teams leap frogged from cover to cover firing as they went, but the rest of the Geth had found decent cover there was very little the fire team could do. Suddenly Marcus had an idea, he looked at Kaiden.

"Cover me." Before the Lieutenant could respond Marcus took off sprinting to the nearest corner of the Tram station. The platform was raised above the ground and came in at about head level for Marcus, a normal person would have had a hell of a time trying to climb it in the middle of a firefight, but Marcus wasn't most people. He jumped and fired his maneuvering jets, his speed coupled with his armor's weight tore the flimsy guard railing apart as he landed lightly on the platform.

One of the Geth was crouched behind a crate right in front of him. It clicked and growled at him before opening fire at Marcus. Marcus moved at a dead sprint, he wasn't the fastest Spartan on record, that honor was reserved for Kelly, one of the original Spartan-II's from the Great War, but he was pretty close. He could hear steel stressing beneath him as he took off, time slowed as his heightened reflexes took over. The Geth was firing its weapon on full automatic, but that wasn't fast enough. Three shots chipped away at Marcus' shields, doing almost no damage, he grabbed the Geth around the chest plate, and an adrenaline and MOLNIR fuelled throw saw the Geth hurled almost ten meters into the air behind him.

Alex and the rest of the team watched in sick fascination has Marcus then ripped the top of the metal crate off and threw it like and enormous frisbee at the three remaining Geth, cutting two of them in half and pinning the third to the wall. The first Geth hit the rocks

with a sickening crunch. Before the last Geth could free itself his pistol sprang up into his hands and a glowing green orb of plasma smashed into its head, killing it.

"All-, all hostiles down." Kaiden called out.

"Spartan what the hell were you thinking!" Marcus turned and saw Alex storming up to him. "You ever pull a crazy stunt like that again and I'll see you court martialed. This mission's too important, and the last thing I need are soldiers like you doing something stupid like that and getting themselves killed! Am I understood!"

"Yes sir!" Marcus was a little amused at the Commander's reaction, if they were going to keep working together they were going to have to have a little chat about the abilities of a Spartan.

Alex nodded at Marcus. His speed and reactions were the fastest she had ever seen in a soldier and she had been secretly impressed until just now. The little stunt he had pulled though was beyond anything a human could possibly do, those Geth units weighed almost ninety kilograms; not even Kaiden's biotics could do that. Now she was a little scared at his capabilities. She put it behind her and turned to examine the dead Specter.

As the commander left, Kaiden walked over, "I guess I upset her sir."

"Don't take it too hard big guy. We've already lost one soldier today, and she doesn't want to lose a second."

"I'm sorry sir. I didn't know."

"It's not your fault, it's no one's fault. It's just-"

"Hey guys check this out!" Ashley called, she was standing next to the crate that Marcus had ripped open. Inside were a number of small side arm's and a case of grenades. "What the hell these were supposed to be a part of last week's shipment!"

Marcus' motion tracker pinged. "Movement!" He called, four sets of eye's and four barrels were instantly leveled at the man as he came out from another stack of crates.

"Whoa wait please don't shoot, I'm human." He cried as he threw his hands up in front of him.

"Sneaking up on us like that nearly got you killed!" Alex growled.

"I'm sorry. I was just- I was just so scared I ran." The four soldiers slowly dropped their weapons. When he realized he wasn't about to get shot he relaxed a bit, "Oh it's all gone to hell! First that dam mother ship now this!"

"What's your name?"

"My name's Powell I work at the docks. As soon as the attack hit I ducked behind the crates, I've been hiding there ever since."

"What can you tell us about the attack?"

"When that ship came down it made this noise, sounded like the shriek of the damned. It made it impossible to think. Then those things showed up, they were led here by some turian-"

"That's impossible Nihlus was with us onboard the Normandy before the attack hit." Kaiden said.

"Not him." Powell said motioning to the dead alien, "Some other turian. I think your friend called him Saren, they seemed to know each other. Your friend he. . . He let his guard down and Saren killed him, shot him right in the back."

"What about the beacon?" Alex asked.

"You mean that thing they dug up, it was loaded on the tram and brought to the space port this morning."

The Commander turned to leave, but Ashley had a question, "Hey Powell you work at the docks you would happen to know where these came from, would you?" She asked motioning to the crate of weapons.

"I uhh-" Powell was instantly nervous.

Marcus narrowed his eyes, something definitely wasn't right. He stepped up and looked at the dock worker, "Don't lie to me Powell." he said.

Powell glanced at the Geth that Marcus had just torn apart and swallowed, "Look, me and some of the guys run a small smuggling ring out of the docks, we take a few small items from the military shipments that's all."

"You son of a bitch!"

Marcus grabbed the front of the dockworker's coveralls with his free hand. In an instant Powell was lifted in the air brought to face level with Marcus.

"Spartan!" The Commander called out.

"A lot of good soldiers died here today Powell." He said calmly. "Soldiers that could have used those grenades and those pistols. I want you to remember that. . . And find a way to make it up to them." Marcus slowly put the dockworker down. "Now get out of here."

Powell nodded and ran off back to some sheds.

"I'm sorry Commander. I'll put myself up for report when this is over."

Alex was surprised. That was the first sign of emotion she had seen out of the big man since he joined the mission. Truth is she wanted to punch the thieving little scumbag herself, but Marcus had beaten her to it, but she had to admit, she did like his style. "That won't be necessary Spartan, you said what needed to be said. Let's move people we need to find that beacon."

Marcus took his place at point again with Ashley right behind him. They turned a corner that would take them to a ramp leading to the

tram, when suddenly two Geth stood up from behind cover with what could only be a pair of rocket launchers aimed for him and the Sergeant. He turned and pinned her against the wall putting himself between her and the Geth as they fired.

His shields took the brunt of the damage from the first one but the second one hit his unprotected back. The Forunner alloy in his MOLNIR armor easily shrugged off the explosion, but the kinetic force of the blast sent him tumbling, Marcus just barely managed to catch himself before he crushed Ashley Williams beneath the weight of his MOLNIR armor. He had lost his pistol in the fall so he grabbed hers from her hip instead spinning off her as he did so, he fired six shots in rapid succession. Three shots for each of the Geth, both fell having had their glowing eye's shot out by Marcus.

"Marcus! You alright?"

He nodded to the Commander as he got up a little shakily, "Why didn't they show up on the motion tracker?" he asked Ariel

"These things are adapting Marcus. They don't have a heat signature like biological organisms. They must have set up and waited for you before you got here."

"I think this is yours." He said handing the pistol back to Ashley Williams. As he scooped up his own pistol from the ground. His shields beeping as they recharged.

"Thanks." she said.

They made their way to the tram and soon found it crawling with Geth. He was tempted to throw another plasma grenade but he didn't think the trams electronics could handle it. He pulled his assault rifle and was about to begin firing when he saw that the second rocket had punched a hole through it and destroyed the mechanism. Shrugging he tossed it away, he always like the pistol better anyway. He and Ashley worked their way up the tram with Kaiden and Alex behind them.

When they got closer to the head of the tram the largest Geth they had ever seen stood up. Marcus quickly fired three rounds into it, without being able to switch to his backup weapon the pistol quickly overheated. This particular Geth, unlike the others must have had better shielding because it shrugged of Marcus' shots, but at the cost of depleting its shields. The fire team opened fire on it but it quickly closed in on them.

Marcus quickly switched to his swords and met the Geth's charge head on. He jumped to the right at the last second bringing his sword down as he did so, cutting the front of the thing's weapon in half, but before he could finish the thing's head exploded in a shower of sparks accompanied by the report of Shepard's sniper rifle. He put his swords away as he scanned the rest of the tram, no more active Geth remained.

The tram took off for the space port.

The team took cover on the tram as best they could when it rolled into the space dock. They could see Geth patrolling the catwalks and upper platforms. When the guard rail dropped they could see a device

on the loading platform.

"Demolition charges! The Geth must have planted them!" Kaiden called out.

"Quickly we have to find them all!"

"Cover me!" Shepard called out. Ashley, Kaiden, and Marcus quickly started firing as Commander Shepard began defusing the bomb, thirty seconds later she called out, "That's one let's find the others."

The team moved out. Marcus dashed across the catwalk using his maneuvering jets. Once on the other side he began providing covering fire for the rest of the team. A white Geth, a color that he hadn't seen before, put up a strange shimmering shield in front of him. Two rounds from his plasma pistol quickly overloaded its energy matrix and it shut down. He and the rest of the team ducked as another pair of rockets came flying past.

Marcus and Ashley pushed their way forward. One Geth got too close and Marcus grabbed it and pitched it over the side on to the electrified rails below.

"That's three down! Only two more left!" Shepard called out. "We're not losing this colony!"

Marcus couldn't have agreed more. Between the four of them, they quickly finished off the remaining Geth.

"That's the last one Commander." Kaiden called when she finished defusing the last bomb.

"Is that the beacon?" Marcus asked pointing. It was some kind of obelisk, with pulsating lights running up and down it.

"Yeah that's it, but it wasn't doing anything like that when they dug it up." Ashley said.

"This is amazing actual working Prothean technology." Kaiden began to walk up to the beacon.

With the fighting done Marcus again began to feel the pain in his body. A reminder of his space walk and subsequent landing. Everything hurt worse now, seeing as how he had taken a pair of rockets head on he wasn't surprised, but as the adrenaline wore off he began to get dizzy, he put up a hand to brace himself against one of the crates.

"Marcus I'm registering a dangerous drop in your blood pressure, and an elevated white blood cell count, signs that you're bleeding internally again, you need to get to a med bay as soon as possible."

"Biofoam." He said.

"I've already tried, but the rocket you took damaged the system you'll have to get it repaired before it'll work."

"Hey you okay big guy?" Ashley was looking at him a concerned look on

her face.

"I'm fine."

Ashley just raised an eyebrow, causing Marcus to laugh.

"Okay maybe not, but it's nothing that can't be fixed after a few hours in a med bay."

"That's better. I. . . I want to thank you.."

Marcus just shrugged "For what?"

"You saved my life twice today you know that?"

"You would have done the same for me."

"Roger Normandy. Standing by." Alex walked over to Ashley and the Spartan interrupting their conversation. Alex opened her mouth to speak when suddenly the beacon pulsed, catching Kaiden in some kind of energy field.

"Commander!" Marcus called out.

Alex looked over and saw Kaiden in trouble, she took off without a moment's hesitation. Marcus tried to follow, but another wave of dizziness made him stumble. Alex reached the Lieutenant first just as the energy field caused by the beacon lifted him into the air. She jumped and pulled him back to the ground. She turned and threw him back to the others. Marcus caught the Lieutenant just in time to see the Commander lifted off the ground in his place. He took a step forward to grab her when Ashley grabbed him.

"No don't touch her! It's too dangerous!" Marcus was torn. He wanted to go help the Commander, but without knowing what this technology was doing to her he had to agree with Ashley. Suddenly the beacon exploded throwing Alex into Marcus arms.

"Get a Med Evac! Now!"

As soon as the Normandy had landed he sprinted up the ramp with the Commander in his arms. A man in a Captain's uniform greeted them at the top of the ramp. His eyes widened as soon as he caught site of Marcus.

"What happened? Lieutenant who is this?"

"Don't worry Captain he's with us, but we need to get the Commander to sick bay."

The Captain nodded at Kaiden's words, "Come on."

The Captain led Marcus and the others through the Normandy to the sick bay. The Doctor turned out to be a graceful woman that looked to be in her mid to late forties. She took one look at Marcus and the Commander and didn't hesitate, "Put her on the exam table over there." She pointed as he put on a lab coat that seemed to be same regardless of which universe Marcus was in.

Marcus laid the Commander down on the table and took a step back.

"Everyone out, now." The doctor didn't raise her voice, but that didn't mean it was any less of an order.

"Marcus! Your blood pressure's dropping again!" Ariel called out just as a fresh wave of dizziness hit the Spartan. This time he had to drop to a knee to keep himself from falling over.

"Marcus!" Ashley called out, "You're hurt!"

The doctor looked at him, "Get that armor off of him and put him on the table next to me."

"Ariel, purge the armor." Marcus ordered.

The heavy MOLNIR plates fell from Marcus in a massive pile. His chest plate hit the deck with enough force to dent the floor panel. Ashley had to step back or have the same thing happen to her foot as his back plate fell off. He reached up and removed the seals from his helmet and pulled it off. He set it down next to the rest of his armor. His nausea growing with each passing moment. All he had left was the flexible ballistic layer that he wore underneath the heavy plates.

"Sergeant I need your help. The ballistic suit seals are located along the spine starting at the base of the neck. There should be four of them."

"I see them." Marcus sighed in relief as he felt the ballistic suit fall away from him. He quickly shucked out of his suit with the help of Kaiden and Ashley. With the ballistic suit off he could see a marvelous bruise spreading across his ribs and stomach.

The Doctor came up to him as he laid down, "You'll be alright." She said as she put a needle into his neck.

"Yes ma'am."

Marcus felt sleep take him.

* * *

><p>"What is he doctor?"<p>

"He's human that's for certain, but he shows signs of extensive modifications."

"What kind of modifications?"

"This ceramic composite covers his entire bone structure. It would take a tremendous amount of force to break his bones. Also his entire nervous system has been replaced with cybernetic neural fibers that enhance his reflexes. His muscle density is twice that of a normal human's, and his metabolism runs about the same. Those are just the modifications I've been able to identify, Captain."

"Are you telling me he's some kind of super soldier?"

"That's as good a description as I've heard so far, and judging from his injuries I'd go so far as to say that he wasn't even a peak efficiency down there. He had a pair of ruptured tendons in his

shoulder, the bones in his legs had hair line fractures in them, he was suffering from massive internal bleeding, and on top of that he had countless other minor injuries and sprains any of which would have put one of our marines on light duty for a week. Thank goodness for medigel, between that, his metabolism, and the stimulants I've injected him with, he should be fully recovered in a week."

"Danm." Captain Anderson, wasn't one to curse, but even he had to appreciate the information that the doctor had given him. Between her and Kaiden Alenko's report he was beginning to grasp just how powerful the man on the table in front of him was.

Alex could hear the doctor and Captain Anderson talking as she slowly began to wake up.

"Commander you're awake. How do you feel?"

"Like the morning after shore leave." She dead panned "What happened to me?"

"Physically you're fine, much better than my other patient, but I noticed some unusual brain activity, abnormal beta waves. I also an increase in your rapid eye movement, signs typically associated with intense dreaming." Dr. Chakwas answered.

Alex looked over to see Marcus asleep on the exam table. Bruises of all shapes, sizes, and colors covered his body. She looked back at the Captain "Just before I passed out I had some kind of vision."

"A vision? A vision of what?"

Alex shuddered as she recalled those last few moments before she gained consciousness. It was pretty pretty gruesome, but most of it was a blur. "I saw. . . I don't know what I saw. I saw death, destruction, mayhem. There were synthetics, Geth maybe, they were slaughtering people butchering them."

"We don't know what information was contained inside that beacon commander. Lost Prothean technology, blue prints for some weapon of mass destruction, it doesn't matter. That's not why I'm here." Alex raised her eyebrow at the Captain. "It's Saren, that other turian." He said answering her unasked question.

"He's a Specter, Commander, and he hates humans. Saren's the best, he's the Citadel's top agent but if he's working with the Geth that means he's gone rouge. A rouge Specter's trouble. He can go anywhere, do almost anything. And now he has the secrets to the beacon."

"Where are we Captain?"

"We're still at Eden Prime, Commander. We'll be leaving for the Citadel soon to file our report with the council, but before that I wanted to ask you about this man."

Alex looked over at Marcus again. She could see the gentle rise and fall of his heavily muscled chest as he slept.

"I'm afraid I can't tell you much Captain. All I know is that he calls himself a Spartan and that he's a daemon in a fire fight. If

you want more we'll have to wait till he wakes up."

"That shouldn't take too long with his metabolism as high as it is he should be waking up fairly shortly."

Marcus could hear the Commander and the Captain talking. He wasn't awake yet, but his mind had begun to process information around him. He could hear the sound of medical equipment, he was a little confused he couldn't remember why he be in a medical bay. Then it all came back to him, the installation he discovered in space, the strange colony, the Geth, all of it came rushing to him.

He sat up instantly, taking in his surroundings. He could see the Captain and the Commander standing of to one side. The doctor came up to him and put a hand on his shoulder, "Easy soldier," she said, "I don't know what you did to yourself, but I'll not have you tearing apart all the work I just did fixing you. You're safe here."

"Yes doctor." Satisfied that her patient wasn't about to hurt himself again she nodded and went back to her desk.

Marcus looked back at the Captain and the Commander and saluted.
"Sirs."

Alex got her first real look at the Spartan. He was pale, not sickly pale, more like the people she had seen stationed on board starships for too long that haven't gotten enough natural sunlight. His hair was jet black and cut short to his head, and he had the beginnings of a five o'clock shadow. His body reminded her of painting she had seen once of an old Greek God, Zeus she thought or maybe Poseidon, but the feature that struck her most though were his eyes. They were a shade of brown she had never seen before, so light they were almost golden.

"You don't have to worry about that here son; not while you're in Sick Bay." The Captain's words snapped her back to focus. "I'm Captain Anderson, you've met the Commander already."

Marcus nodded to her, "Commander."

"Marcus, what did I say about doing something crazy?" A small smile tugging at her lips.

"If I recall Commander, you were the one who grabbed Kaiden and threw him away from the beacon, only to be caught in the blast yourself." He replied.

"And look at me, I'm the one standing and you're the one on a hospital bed."

"Alright that's enough Commander." Anderson said, it was good to see the Commander smiling after losing Jenkins, but they had to get this mess straightened out. "Petty Officer, I'll be honest. I checked with my superiors, you don't exist, there's no such thing as a Spartan, at least not outside of history, and we don't have any record of you in the Alliance military. We took a DNA sample and checked. Now Lieutenant Alenko and Sergeant Williams are vouching for you, and I've seen the video logs of you in action down on the ground. What you did down there for our people has convinced me to cut you some slack, but I still need you to explain who you are, and where you're

from."

"Understood sir. But, it might be easier for me to show you."

"Okay, how?"

"All I need is my ballistic suit and my helmet, and I can take you to my ship."

"Alright then get dressed. Commander as soon as our guest's ready bring him up to the cockpit."

The Commander stood outside the Sick Bay while the Spartan put his suit on. A few of the crew members had tried to move some of his armor out of the way for the doctor while she worked, but they soon found out that it was quite a bit heavier than they thought. The chest piece that dented the sick bay floor for example had weighed over a hundred twenty kilograms. How he was able to move so fast she could only guess.

Soon enough he stepped out wearing his black and grey ballistic suit, with his helmet tucked under one arm. "Ready Commander."

"Alright let's go meet Joker. Ashley come on, you're going to want to see this."

"You got it skipper. How you doing big guy?"

"Like I said nothing a few hours in sick bay can't fix."

"That's good, it's good to see you both up and walking around so soon."

Marcus got quite a few stares as the three of them made their way to the cockpit. Even outside his armor Marcus was still taller than any of them, so much so that he had to duck as he stepped through some doorways.

"You're kidding right, Joker? I saw him throw a Geth almost ten meters in the air like it was a rag doll, this of course happening after he jumped over a six foot ledge like it was nothing." Kaiden argued

"I'm just saying size isn't everything."

Alex couldn't help but smile a bit, "Alright Joker why don't you turn around and say that."

"Hey Com- Whoa!" Joker had turned around in his chair to look at the Commander, instead he saw the biggest person he had ever seen in his life. He looked like he could sneeze and break every bone in Joker's body.

By Marcus' time almost everyone in the UNSC had seen a Spartan at some point in their life, so it was comical to see the small pilot's reaction to him. Alex, Kaiden, and Ashley all snickered and grinned a bit at Joker's reaction. "Told you." Kaiden said

The Captain joined them, "Let's see this ship of your Spartan."

"Yes Captain." Marcus put his helmet back on. "Ariel you alright?"

"Just peachy. Been a little boring, but besides that I'm good. You have a plan?"

"Give me the location of the _Pride_, we're going to show them the ship." Marcus handed off the coordinates to Joker.

"I don't see anything." Joker said.

"Ariel drop the Forerunner Cloak." Everyone on the bridge gasped as the _Pride of Vengeance_ suddenly came into view. "This, Captain, is the UNSC _Pride of Vengeance_ if you'd please come aboard I can show you who I am and where I came from.

Anderson felt his teeth grind, the _Pride_ was a warship no doubt about that. The sheer number of weapons arrays lining its hull made that abundantly clear. The size of the main barrel made his gut clench, the bore size was almost the size of Normandy's cargo hold. The ship was massive.

Once aboard the, Marcus lead them directly to the opps room. The Huragok had been busy while he had been down on the planet, a lot of the stray debris had been picked up but it would be a long time before the _Pride_ was ready to see any action.

"First thing I need you to understand is that, I don't think I'm from this universe." Everyone looked at Marcus like he was crazy. "Less the six hours ago this ship and I were slated to join a team of Spartans at the colony New Harvest, while we were underway we detected a slipspace anomaly and were ordered to investigate. It turned out to be this." Suddenly an image of the installation he and Ariel had encountered appeared before them.

"That looks like a Mass Relay Captain." Kaiden commented.

"Yes it does, but the scale . . . It's immense."

Marcus continued, "As near as I was able to confirm, it stands at roughly a hundred kilometers in length. I can't tell you how big it is exactly because of the number of gravimetric anomalies we encountered. These anomalies were strong enough to disrupt slipspace, as we got closer we were hit with some kind of energy pulse, you can see the damage it caused to the ship, it overloaded a number of critical system. The slipspace capacitors were charged as a direct result of the overload. When the computers scrambled, a slipspace waveform generated. I can only guess that when we entered slip space we tore a hole in space time, when we exited we came out here, in a parallel universe."

Marcus spent the next two hours explaining the situation to the Captain and the Commander. He told them about the history of the UNSC, the colonies, The Great War, the Flood, he told them everything he could, he kept Ariel secret for now; she had told him that it might be a bad idea to let them know that she was an AI. He even showed them the slipspace generator, but what really convinced the Captain was the Huragok.

"They're basically organic computers, sir. With a knack for

machinery. As skilled as they are it'll still take them the better part of six months to get the _Pride _back in fighting shape."

Captain Anderson, sat and watched as three of the Huragok rebuilt a power relay from scratch. Those aliens were remarkable, he knew that power relays were tricky components to replace at the best of times, this one had looked like nothing more than a charred black piece of scrap when they pulled it out from the wall. In five minutes they had it stripped down to its basic components, every piece was clean and polished, the pieces that couldn't be repaired easily were set to the side and new replacements brought in, and then just as quickly they had the device reassembled and installed back in the conduit. The emergency lighting in the corridor they were standing in turned off just as the main power was restored to this section of the ship. What he wouldn't give to have even one of those aliens onboard every Dreadnaught in the Alliance Fleet.

"Alright son, I believe you." He suddenly understood the reason for the Spartan's augments, an Alliance marine wouldn't last a second against the enemies he had described.

The group made their way back to the opps room, when Kaiden spoke up, "There's something that's been bothering me Marcus. You said back on the planet that you performed an orbital insertion to land at the colony, but from what I've seen this ship's so badly damaged I find it hard to believe that you could fly anything down to the planet, how'd you pull it off?"

Ashley shot Kaiden a look, his tone had made it clear that he was just curious, but taken the wrong way someone could mistake the question as an accusation. Apparently Marcus didn't mind answering though.

"It's called a Spartan Drop, sir." They had reached the opps room again and he pulled up the footage from his helmet. "Someone coined the term years ago and it just stuck."

The group gasped in shock as they saw firsthand from Marcus' point of view as he was pulled into space.

"Holy crap." Ashley summed up everyone's thoughts.

"That's. . . You're insane." Kaiden was too transfixed to look at the Spartan directly.

Alex was just as shocked as the rest of her crew, but she kept it hidden inside as she watched Marcus plummet to Eden Prime's surface, but even she had to wince when they saw his landing. _How tough is this guy?_ She thought, no wonder he was covered in bruises. "Captain, what are we going to do?"

Anderson looked at the Spartan, the footage had stopped just in time to see him save Ashley's life from the Geth. "I think that's up to him Commander." He had no way to read Marcus' face behind his golden mask. "Technically he's not part of the Alliance, so I can't just order him to join the Normandy, and after seeing what this ship is capable of, I wouldn't even try. Why don't you ask him and see for yourself."

Alex looked at the Spartan, "You saw what it was like down there, this guy Saren's dangerous, and I need to stop him, the problem is he has an army. Chances are the Council won't listen to us, and even if they do there's a good possibility that they won't do anything about it. I wish I could say that humanity's as strong here as it is in the universe you're from, but we're not. We're going to be alone in this fight, and something tells me I'm going to need all the help I can get."

Marcus clicked his speakers off, "What do you think Ariel?"

"Are you kidding? You've never been able to pass up a good fight. Besides, these people need you, and I don't see us going home anytime soon, if ever. I wouldn't even know where to begin calculating the exit coordinates for another universe!"

"I'm going to need some equipment."

"Already been taken care of. I had the Huragok modify one of the HEV pods. I had them strip everything out of it and packed it full of every piece of mechanical or medical equipment I think you'd need. All you need to do is just grab some weapons and head over."

"What about the Pride?"

"I've scanned their ship, discreetly of course. With the cloak up there's no way for them detect us if we don't want them to, but for a safe measure I was going to move the ship to the system's outer edge just to be safe, there's a lot of space for me to hide in."

That was the one downside to their plans, if Marcus left onboard the Normandy, Ariel would have to stay behind to monitor and direct the repairs. He didn't want to leave her, but the Commander was going to need help.

"Go Spartan. I'll be fine, I'll meet up with you once the repairs are done, besides this way if anyone comes looking to finish the colony off, I can give them a few surprises."

Alex held her breath, she had thought that the Spartan would jump at the chance to join the Normandy. He was exactly what she needed to pull off this kind of mission, but the second she asked the question he went quiet. He had gone almost completely still but from time to time she could make out little jerks of his head like he was talking to someone and didn't want them to know about it. Finally he looked at her.

"Alright Commander, but before I go over there's someone I should introduce you to. I'm not the only UNSC crew member onboard. I'd like all of you to meet Ariel." Suddenly Ariel's form appeared before them.

"You've got an AI on board, are you insane?" Kaiden asked incredulous.

"Hey LT, think about it, with all the advancements they've made surely it's possible for them to create a stable AI." Ashley was a little upset at the Lieutenant's tone, so far the Spartan had been nothing but helpful, so what if he had shot at the Lieutenant and the Commander, the way things were going down there on the planet she

would have shot at anything that moved too.

"No, I get it, it's just a lot to processes is all. Sorry Marcus."

"It's alright sir."

"If it helps, all UNSC AI cognitive processes are based off of the image of a living human brain. The individual that provided my cognitive pattern was a dance choreographer, I have a safe operational life span of two hundred fifty years before the onset of rampancy." Ariel explained.

"Wait so, you're what? A clone of a human beings mind?" Kaiden asked.

"Not at all, all I gained from my 'donor' was her method of thinking, her creative process. My memories are my own. Now as for Marcus' sanity I've had reason to question it a few times myself, if I were you he's the one I'd keep my eyes on." Everyone had a few laughs at her words.

"Ariel will stay here onboard the Pride. She has orders to finish the repairs of the Pride of Vengeance and to monitor the system, if the Geth return she will do her best to protect the colony." Marcus' said.

"Well I think that answers your question Commander, we need to get under way as soon as possible, Marcus. As soon as he gets his equipment brought over to the Normandy tell Joker to set a course for the Citadel."

Marcus' "equipment transfer" involved him man handling a five hundred kilogram pod into the Normandy's vehicle bay, much to the amusement of the entire crew. Alex stood to one side talking with Engineer Adams.

"I'm going to have to strip down all those deck plates and replace them." He mourned.

"Sorry Adam's it's got to be done, he needs that equipment, besides that's the name of the game right?"

"Yes ma'am."

Soon enough the ship was under way. The Mass Relay network operated on system of Prime and Secondary relay. Generally a single Secondary relay connected an entire cluster of star systems to a Prime relay, and Prime relays connected to other Prime relays across entire sections of the galaxy. Luckily the Utopia system of the Exodus Cluster served as the gravity anchor for the cluster's Mass Relay, but the Normandy still had to travel to three different relays before they could reach the Citadel. A trip which would take three days.

5. Chapter 5

**A/N: Hey guys I meant to add this in before I posted this chapter, just goes to show you sometimes its best to wait until after you've

had your morning coffee before you post something. This chapter is where I begin to diverge a little bit from the Mass Effect story line, don't worry you will get to see Ariel smack talk Sovereign and all that jazz just not in this chapter, and at it's core the story won't change much, but I'm taking a little creative freedom and doing something unexpected. You won't see it here in fact it'll probably won't happen for a few chapters from now, but this chapter sets the ground work. **

Also like I said before I love to get comments and questions about my work. Please feel free to leave review's or PM me if you have comments or concerns or if you find I've made a mistake somewhere. I'm doing this because I love it, and part of my love is that I know I need to get better at writing. I'll always listen to honest feedback, in fact I want people to question me, challenge me, make me sit there and go, "Why the hell did I write it like this again?"

Enjoy!

* * *

><p>Marcus spent a lot of this time with the crew of the Normandy. Learning what he could about the new universe he found himself in. He studied the formation of the Alliance and the First Contact War. He learned about all the Council races, the Solarians, the Asari, and the Turian, and how they governed the Citadel Council. He learned everything he could about all the species that occupied Citadel space, and a few that didn't like to Batarrians and the Vorcha.<p>

He learned that Kaiden is a biotic, an individual that possessed the rare genetic markers that allowed him to manipulate and control dark energy with his mind. The Lieutenant gave him a demonstration one day in the vehicle bay by helping Marcus secure his equipment.

"I guess it makes sense that you've never seen a biotic before." Kaiden said as he lifted one of the heavy duffels Marcus had brought over from the Pride. "The only way to activate the genetic markers necessary for biotics is to expose the brain to eezo during the fetal development stages. Without element zero you don't get biotics."

"What are you two up to?" Alex had stepped off the lift. Looking over she saw Kaiden and the Spartan moving and unloading Marcus' equipment. For once Marcus wasn't wearing his armor, the heavy plates were on a rack that would allow easy access for maintenance and kept them out of the way while the ballistic suit was laid on top of workbench, all manner of tools and devices that Alex couldn't identify were strewn around it. Instead he wore a set of coveralls that he must have borrowed, they were entirely too small and were stretched to the point of bursting.

"Just helping our new guest get settled in sir." Kaiden answered.

"Marcus, I see you've displaced our requisitions officer."

"Sorry about that ma'am. Some of the equipment in this pod needs power and after talking with Engineer Adams he decided that the best place for me to tap into the ship's power was here."

She waved him off, "Don't worry about it." She looked at Kaiden, you know he's actually requested a transfer over this?"

"You're kidding." Kaiden's eyes were wide.

"I wish I was. He cited something about 'a change in the ship's workplace environment that would cause unavoidable financial harm'." Kaiden couldn't help but laugh at Alex's words. "Anyway the Captain and I approved his request, with a few notes of our own. He should do quite nicely stationed on an Earth base for a while."

Marcus was a little confused, "I'm sorry Commander, but why would my presence here cause him unavoidable financial harm?"

"In the Alliance, Requisition's Officer's perform the same basic functions as they did for you back home I'm sure, that is they monitored ship supplies and tracked orders and deliveries to and from the ship. Warships are always in constant need of maintenance, the Normandy even more so because she's a prototype. Engineer Adams is constantly tweaking her drive core and to do that he needs parts. Requisitions Officers in the Alliance also perform a second basic role. Alliance marines are issued a set of basic equipment and armor when they enter into active service, it's decent but it's not the best. The Alliance allows its marines to purchase their own equipment, so long as it meets the Alliance's standards. Because most Requisition's Officer's already have the skill set necessary to coordinate deliveries and such, the Alliance allows the RO's to purchase licenses to the major manufactures so they can sell their wares directly to the marines onboard the ships directly. A business savvy RO can make up to twice their annual salary if their lucky." She motioned to the weapons Marcus had brought with him from the Pride waiting to be place on their racks. "I guess when he saw all the stuff you brought on board he got a little bent out of shape."

"I didn't mean to step on anyone's toe's ma'am."

Alex just shook her head, "You're fine. I expect my people to be able to adapt to situations on the fly, if he can't handle it it's his problem not yours. We'll be getting a new RO at the Citadel. In the meantime the Captain wanted me to give you this." She held out an Omni tool to the Spartan. "If you check the entries under the Codex tab you'll find a number of files which have been highlighted for your review. These entries should be able to provide you with most of the basic information you'll require, info about different races, cultures, etc. We'll be arriving at the Citadel in less than twenty-four hours, as soon as you've got this squared away I want you to review as much of this information as possible before we arrive, also both of you try and get some rest before we arrive, something tells me it's going to be a long day."

"Yes ma'am." Kaiden and Marcus answered.

* * *

><p>Serpent Nebula Widow**_

"Citadel control, this is SSV Normandy requesting permission to land."

"Stand by for clearance Normandy. Clearance granted you may begin your approach, transferring you to an Alliance operator."

Marcus watched as the Citadel grew until it dwarfed the Normandy. Jeff Moreau, aka "Joker", piloted the ship with smooth precision. Marcus found it fascinating to watch, like a conductor before an orchestra, Jeff was in complete control. Marcus was impressed. Eventually the Normandy entered her docking bay and the mag clamps secured her in place.

"And that ladies and gentlemen, is a perfect landing, by a perfect pilot."

"That was well done Flight Lieutenant." Marcus commented.

"Marcus, don't stroke his ego. It's already bigger than the Normandy. Come on, we got a meeting with the Ambassador." Alex said, as she, Kaiden, and Ashley walked through the airlock.

"Figures." Jeff mumbled, "Hey, Marcus right? Just call me Jeff, or Joker, none of this Flight Lieutenant crap, okay?" Looking at him Jeff was probably the last person you'd expect to see in an Alliance uniform. Marcus had met him in the galley earlier this morning, originally he hadn't thought much of the man. Everything about him was unprofessional from the state of his uniform to his beard, combine that with his Vrolik syndrome Marcus had thought him a joke, but after spending a few minutes talking with the man Marcus could tell that he was one of those few people that simply just excelled at their chosen profession. Joker might have an attitude problem, he might brag about him being the "best goddamn pilot in the Alliance", but he had earned it the hard way. Marcus had no doubt that Joker could handle whatever was thrown at him. All this meant that he had earned a thumbs up in Marcus' mind.

"Alright, Jeff. We'll see you." Marcus nodded as he left. Joker couldn't help but smile as Marcus left. Most of the people he met treated him like dirt until he shoved their faces in it, he remembered one particular Turian General that had been forced to admit he was wrong, and even after they treated him like he was something special. The Spartan however had admitted that he was wrong and then had proceeded to treat him like everyone else on the Normandy, like one of the team. Not even the Commander did that yet.

Marcus joined the Commander and the rest in the lift. They were heading for Citadel Security to check in, from there they would make their way to the Presidium where they would meet the ambassador.

"Marcus, you have been classified as Top Secret, the ambassador knows about you obviously, but as far as everyone else is concerned you're just regular soldier of the Alliance, one that's equipped with a new experimental armor system."

"Understood ma'am."

* * *

><p>"Captain I see you brought half your crew with you."<p>

"Just the ground team from Eden Prime, in case you had any questions."

Ambassador Udina set Marcus on edge. He was one of those politicians that loved power. More often than not for Marcus' comfort the old axiom had proven true that absolute power corrupts absolutely, and Udina craved power. Shepard and the Captain had interrupted him in the middle of a holo call with the Council.

"I have the mission reports. I assume they're accurate?"

Captain Anderson ignored the jibe, "Sounds like you go the Council to give us an audience."

"They were not happy about it. Saren's their top agent. They don't like him being accused of treason."

Alex gritted her teeth, "I'm not going to sit on my ass just because the Council doesn't want to do anything. If they won't stop Saren I will."

"Settle down Commander you've already done more than enough to jeopardize your candidacy for the Specters. The mission on Eden Prime was a chance to prove you could get the job done instead Nihlus ended up dead and the beacon was destroyed. We'd better hope the C-Sec investigation turns up evidence to support our accusations. Otherwise the Council might use this as an excuse to keep you out of the Specters."

Marcus wanted to punch the man, how could he be so blind? "That's Saren's fault not hers." He said.

"Ah yes, the super soldier from an alternate universe, this is just perfect. You've created so many headaches for me I had to requisition a second secure VI from the Alliance just to keep track of all the communications flying back and forth about you. Do you have any idea of what would happen if word of you got out? That the Alliance has an unknown dreadnought with more firepower than anything previously built? One that operates without Element Zero?"

"You misunderstand sir, The Alliance doesn't have control of the Pride, I do. As the ranking UNSC officer, no one in the Alliance has the authority to order me to hand her over. I'm here for Shepard and for Humanity as a whole, not the Alliance."

"It doesn't matter how I see it, it's what the other Council races will think. If the Turians find out, it would be like the First Contact War. The meeting's in a few minutes." He looked at Anderson, "Come with me Captain, I want to go over a few things with you before the hearing. Shepard you and the others," He gave Marcus a look, "can meet us at the top of the Citadel tower, top level. I'll make sure you have clearance to get in." He turned and led Anderson out of the office.

"That's why I hate politicians." Ashley said.

"The more things change. . ."

"You said it Marcus." Kaiden answered.

Marcus just couldn't shake the Ambassador's words. Where he came from, there were no ambassadors, sure the UNSC had an alliance with the Sangheili but that was strictly for military purposes. His attitude towards the Councilors, just didn't make sense to him.

"Come one people, let's go see what the illustrious Council has to say." Alex said.

The group made their way to the top of the Citadel Tower. The elevator took almost fifteen minutes before it reached the top.

"So Marcus, What do you think of the Citadel?" Kaiden asked.

"To be honest sir, it's a little disappointing. It only measures forty five kilometers in length. That's pretty impressive, but the UNSC has fifteen Super Carriers that are ten kilometers in length, each with enough fire power to destroy a planet. The Pride of Vengeance is just a frigate, keep that scale in mind when you compare it to the Normandy. The Covenant build star stations over three hundred kilometers in length before we crippled their economy." Kaiden deflated a bit at Marcus' statement, "That said sir, it's interesting to see so many species working together."

Ashley laughed at Marcus' statement, "Face it LT, he's seen more than either of us combined, I doubt we'll be able to impress him so easily." The rest of the elevator ride was spent in silence as they approached the top level of the Citadel tower.

"Alright people the Council will be meeting soon." Alex said. They exited the lift the soon found a pair of Turains arguing in front of the elevator.

It was the first chance Marcus had to see a living turian up close. He quickly reviewed everything he had learned about them over the last few days. Their government was a hierarchal clan structure, based heavily on military tradition. They had earned their place as part of the Council for their efforts in the Krogan Rebellions, and were known for their rigid social structure. They are considered the Council's watchdogs and military protectors, owing to the fact that they have the largest portion of the Citadel's defense contracts.

"Saren's hiding something! Give me more time! Stall them!" One of the Turains all but yelled, Shepard couldn't help but perk her ears at that comment.

"Stall the Council? Don't be ridiculous, your investigation is over Garrus." The Turian walked off with a dismissive wave to Garrus.

Garrus couldn't help but feel agitation towards Executor Pallin, he just knew something was off with Saren in his gut, but he hadn't been able to find anything, then he noticed Shepard. "Commander Shepard, Garrus Vakarian, I was in charge of the C-Sec investigation regarding Saren Arterius."

"What did you find out?"

Garrus just shook his head in disgust, "I don't trust him, but he's a

Specter, so everything he touches is classified. I couldn't find any hard evidence. Anyway you better get going Shepard. Maybe they'll listen to you." He stepped aside and let the humans past evaluating them as they did so. The Commander he liked, she had a look of fire in her eyes that told him she wasn't about to let things go with Saren, something he could relate to. The two that were wearing standard Alliance armor, were as competent as any soldier, but what really drew his eyes was the goliath behind them.

As a cop, Garrus used his natural height to his advantage especially when interrogating suspects. Most turians stood a little under two meter's and Garrus was a little taller than that, but this man dwarfed him. Now he knew what it was like to be on the other side of the table. He couldn't see the human's face, but something about that impassive gold visor only made it worse.

Alex and the group quickly made their way up the steps to the Council chamber where Captain Anderson was waiting for them. "The meetings already started. Shepard, you, Ashley, Lieutenant Alenko come with me. Marcus, I want you to stay down here until we're finished."

"Wait Captain, he was down there with us on Eden Prime."

"I know Commander, I don't like it either, but the Alliance has classified everything about him as Top Secret. Outside of the Normandy's crew the only people that know of his existence are Udina, Admiral Hackett, and the committee. To everyone else he's just a soldier, but if we parade him in front of the Council questions will be asked. We'd like to avoid that for now."

Shepard didn't like leaving Marcus behind, but the Captain was right. "Sorry Marcus, he's right you'll have to stay here."

"Understood ma'am." The Spartan watched as Alex and the rest of the team climbed the stairs. He took to opportunity to look around the Citadel Tower, practically every species in Council Space was represented here. He could see Elcor, Solarians, Humans, Volus, and even a few Hanar, all of them walked around attending to their own business. Almost everyone looked at Marcus, but most were so busy that they couldn't spare more than a glance or two. Rather than continue to draw attention Marcus stepped to the side where he could wait until Shepard was finished with the hearing.

* * *

><p>"The Geth attack is a matter of some concern, but there is nothing to indicate that Saren was involved in anyway."<p>

Alex and her squad stepped onto the platform. The three councilors stood opposite of them, and projected on the largest holo she had ever seen stood Saren. She caught sight of him watching her as she waked in.

"The investigation by Citadel Security turned up no evidence to support your charge of treason."

"An eye witness saw him kill Nihlus in cold blood." Udina responded.

"We've read the Eden Prime reports Ambassador, the testimony of one traumatized dock worker is hardly compelling proof." The Salarian practically sneered.

"I resent these accusations. Nihlus was a fellow Specter and a friend."

"That just let you catch him off guard!" Alex could hear the anger in the Captain's voice.

Saren looked down at the Captain, "Ah Captain Anderson, you always seem to be involved when humanity makes false charges against me, and this must be your protégé, the one who let the beacon get destroyed." He sneered.

Alex had had enough, "You're the one who destroyed the beacon, then you tried to cover it up."

"Shift the blame to cover your own failures, just like Captain Anderson. He's taught you well. But what can you expect for a human."

Alex had had enough, she wasn't going to be goaded into a shouting match in front of the council. "Saren despises humanity. That's why he attacked Eden Prime."

"Your species need to learn its place Shepard. You're not ready to join the Council, you're not even ready to join the Specters."

"He has no right to say that! That's not his decision!" Udina objected.

The Asari Councilor looked up at Saren, "Shepard's admission to the Specters is not the purpose of this meeting."

"This meeting has no purpose! The humans are wasting your time Councilor, and mine."

"Saren's hiding behind his position as a Specter. You need to open your eyes."

The Solarian councilor shook his head, "What we need is evidence. So far, we have seen nothing."

"Wait, there is still one outstanding issue." Captain Anderson spoke up. "Commander Shepard's vision, it might have been triggered by the beacon."

"Are we allowing dreams into evidence now? How can I defend myself against this kind of testimony!" Saren protested.

"I agree. Our judgment must be based on facts and evidence, not wild imaginings and reckless speculation."

"Do you have anything to add Commander?"

Alex was pissed, but there was nothing she could do, "You've made your decision, I won't waste my breath."

The Councilors shared a look, then finally the Asari councilor

announced, "The council has found no evidence of any connection between Saren and the Geth, Ambassador your petition to have him disbarred from the Specters is denied."

Saren smiled, "I'm glad to see that justice was served." Alex couldn't wait to punch that smug look off his face.

"This meeting is adjourned."

* * *

><p>All Marcus had to do was take one look at Shepard's face to know that the meeting hadn't gone well.<p>

"We need to take care of Saren ourselves." Marcus could hear the disgust in her voice.

Marcus looked over at the Kaiden, "Was it that bad sir?"

"Yes it was." He looked like he was ready to chew out a bulkhead. "They wouldn't even listen to her Marcus."

"What do we do?"

Udina spoke up, "As a Specter, Saren's virtually untouchable need to find some way to expose him."

"Agreed, any thoughts?" Alex looked at her team.

Kaiden thought for a moment then spoke up, "What about Garrus that C-Sec officer, we saw him arguing with the Executor?"

"That's right, he was asking for more time to finish his report. It sounds like he was close to something." Ashley added, "Maybe he can help us."

Alex looked at Captain Anderson, "That's a good place to start. Any idea where I can find him."

It was Udina that answered her, "I have a contact in C-Sec that can help us track him down, his name is Harkin."

Captain Anderson shook his head, "Forget it, they suspended Harkin last month, drinking on the job. I won't waste my time with that loser."

"You won't have to." Udina countered, "I don't want the Council using your history with Saren as an excuse to dismiss any evidence we turn up."

"Wait you can't just cut the Captain out of this investigation."

"It's alright Shepard. I need to step aside."

"That settles it then, Shepard get the job done." Udina walked away.

"Harkin's probably getting drunk in Cora's den, it's dingy little place in the wards. But I might have another option for you."

"What did you have in mind Captain?"

"There's an information broker here in the Presidium. His name's Barla Von, he works for the Shadow Broker. He might be able to help us get some information on Saren. I have to go take care of some paperwork. Keep me updated on your progress Shepard."

Alex turned and looked at her team, "What do you think Commander? Which lead should we follow?" Kaiden asked.

"Why not both, Kaiden you and Ashley track down Harkin. Marcus, you come with me, we're going to go see Barla Von."

6. Chapter 6

****A/N:** Hey I know its been a while since I last updated this story, truth is I've been busy with work and other things. What I'd like to do is post a new chapter at least once a week, I'm gonna try my best to keep that goal. So here's the next chapter. PLease review and let me know what you'll think.**

Marcus and Shepard had separated from the others at the lifts and they were now walking around the Presidium.

"Sir, may I ask a question?"

"Marcus I like to keep an open door policy, if someone has any concerns I want to know about them."

"I understand. Sir, if the Alliance is trying to keep me a secret, wouldn't have been better for me to go with Kaiden to the wards?" As they walked through the Presidium a number of people had stopped and openly stared at them.

"Marcus you don't set a weapon aside just because it has a little kick. You're a soldier, one of the best I've ever seen, hell you're probably better than me. That said, Captain Anderson raised a good point back there, I'm not going to put you up in front of crowd for everyone to see, but that doesn't mean I'm going to just let you sit and rust on the Normandy either. Chances are this thing with Saren is going to turn a lot of heads and get a lot of attention, so people will know about you, when that time comes I'll let the politicians deal with it."

"I see sir."

"Call me Shepard, Marcus, that or Commander. Everyone else does."

"Yes Commander."

"Also there's another reason for my bringing you along. After Eden Prime I went and had a little chat with Dr. Chakwas. She told me about your modifications: your strength, reflexes, and your bone structure, what she could anyway. I'd like to know more, if I'm going to be an effective Commander I need to know the abilities of my soldiers, what their strength's and weakness are. Normally I can look at their file and get a pretty good idea, but you? I know almost

nothing about you. I'd like to talk to you if you're up for it."

"Alright Commander, what would you like to know?"

"I've already seen your strength first hand, but I've got to ask, how strong are you?"

"My increased muscle density allows me to lift up to three times my own body weight with relative ease, and the electro muscular circuitry in the armor nearly triples that, but if you're asking for what's the maximum I can lift. The M12 LRV, or the Warthog, weighs in at around three and a half tons. I can shift one of those around if I need to."

"That's, that's incredible!" It was humbling to Shepard to know that the man walking beside her could lift a car off the ground with his hands. Shepard hadn't realized how serious his injuries had been down on Eden Prime, it wasn't until after when she had been talking with the doctor, that she'd learned just how much his plummet to the surface had cost him. As far as she was concerned, anybody willing to risk that much and still get up and fight was a damn hero in her books. "Are there any others?"

"That's about it for all the physical modifications, aside from having our vision enhanced, and an acute sense of hearing, you've got the general idea what I'm capable of."

"When you told us about your modifications I was wondering if your eyes had been altered too, there's no way that color's natural."

"Yes ma'am."

"How about your armor, what can you tell me about that?"

This is where things got a little confusing for Marcus, with careful observation it was pretty easy to learn about his physical modifications. The MOLNIR's abilities, however, were still a closely guarded secret even to this day. In the end he decided to trust Shepard. He doubted she would ever tell anyone if he asked her not to. Besides, there's a big difference between being told what MOLNIR can do, and actually understanding how it works.

"The technical specifications of the MOLNIR system is among the UNSC's most closely guarded secrets. That said you do need to have a better understand of its capabilities. Most Spartan Teams operate in groups of four to seven, with one notable exception, and they operate almost completely independently of any other UNSC military forces, to the point that they are often considered their own branch of service. I'm telling you this because I need you to understand just how closely guarded this information is. I meant what I said to your Ambassador, I'm not part of the Alliance and I don't plan to be, but I swore and oath to defend humanity against any and all threats where ever I might find them. I trust you, but I don't trust everyone, do you understand?"

It was the longest speech she had heard so far from the Spartan. It meant a great deal to her to know that he trusted her judgment so much, "Yes Marcus, I do, but before you get started, why

MOLNIR?"

"You mean besides that fact that it's the greatest weapon in Norse mythology and that it requires the strength of a god to wield it?"

Alex smiled, "Point taken."

* * *

><p>"Hey LT, why do you have such a problem with Marcus?"<p>

"Sargent I don't know what you're talking about, I don't have a problem with him."

"Come on LT, he helped us out on Eden Prime, hell he crashed in from orbit and saved all our asses at least once that day, and all you've done is question him."

"It's not that I don't like him, I just don't think we should trust him so easily. You heard what he said in Udina's office, he's not Alliance, have you read any of the information he gave us about the UNSC and where he comes from?"

"I've skimmed it."

"Go back and take a good look at the origins of the Spartan Program. Originally they were meant to bring Earth's colonies under control. Before the Covenant, the greatest threat to the UNSC was its own people, someone saw that war was inevitable, and instead of pulling a Nagasaki and Hiroshima, they developed the Spartans. No matter what kind of justification history provided them with, the fact still remains that the Spartan were meant to fight against humans."

"But that was long before Marcus was even born."

"I know I just have a hard time wrapping my head around the knowledge any government would be so willing to use such an effective weapon against its own people."

"I guess I can see where you're coming from sir. Is this the place?"

"It must be."

Ashley and Alenko had been walking through the wards for half an hour. As they made their way through the seedier and rougher parts of the wards the streets became narrower and less maintained.

People think of the Citadel as the most advanced place in the galaxy, but just like anywhere else, make the wrong turn and it can be just as dangerous as any slum. The only difference here is that the Keepers keep the place so clean that you can't tell unless you know what to look for. C-sec did their best to maintain order, but generally fights could break in an instant and end almost as quickly.

Anderson's description of Chora's Den as dingy might have been a little misplaced, from the outside it certainly looked that way, but

once inside it was a state of the art entertainment facility. Music blared in the background and lights pulsed in time with the beat. A number of patrons chatted at the bar, and half naked Asari dancers entertained anyone who would watch.

"Classy place." Ashley said.

"Come on let's see if we can find Harkin."

When they approached the bar a young human girl greeted them, "What can I get for you?"

"We're looking for someone, his name's Harkin, he's a regular here."

"Oh Hark? Yeah he usually shows around three that's when happy hour starts. He's a bit of an ass to some of the girls but he's always nice to me."

"Okay great." Kaiden looked at Ashley, "Well what do you want to do?"

"Let's wait for him here, besides in the meantime we can enjoy the show." A wicked grin spread across her face.

"Oh no, no way."

"Come on LT, we need to blend in, the easiest way to do that is act like patrons, so come on." She walked to the nearest booth and looked at the Asari hanging off the pole, "I want you to give my boyfriend a dance," she passed over a credit chit motioning to Kaiden as she did so, "make it good will you?"

The dancer palmed the chit and walked over to Kaiden, "Come on big boy."

"Sargent, I will kill you."

"Come on LT, enjoy yourself."

* * *

><p>"I think this is the place." The office Shepard and Marcus found themselves in front of was the only place registered to one Barla Von. It had taken them over an hour to find it, during that time Marcus had filled her in on some of the more technical details of the MOLNIR. Shepard had whistled appreciatively when he told her that his armor was equipped with the same cloak as the Pride, slightly smaller in size, but no less effective.

"Just out of curiosity Commander, how is this person supposed to help us?"

"He's an agent for the Shadow Broker, the most powerful information broker in the galaxy. No one knows who the Shadow Broker is, and any dealings he has is done through agents like the one we're about to meet. If anyone has any information about Saren, it'll be him."

The office was spartan, a single wide desk sat in the middle of the floor, and a pair of comfortable chairs were before it. Behind the

desk sat a Volus who looked up as they entered. "What's this one of the Earth Clan, ah a very famous one yes? You are the one called Shepard yes? It is an honor to welcome the sole survivor of Akuze." He had to pause between each phrase to take a breath.

"I'm sorry do I know you?"

"No, but my job requires me to keep informed. I am a financial advisor to many important clients onboard the Citadel, when someone as important as yourself arrives on the Citadel I take notice."

"I've heard you work for the Shadow Broker, I'm looking for information on Saren."

The Volus paused, "You're very blunt Shepard, but you're right. I am an agent for the Shadow Broker, and I do have some information about Saren. Normally this information would cost a small fortune, but these are exceptional circumstances, so I am going to give it to you for free."

"What's the catch?" Marcus asked.

"There is no catch, the Shadow broker is quite upset with Saren right now. They used to do a lot of business, until Saren turned on him."

Alex looked over to Marcus, "Saren betrayed him imagine that."

"No matter what you think, Saren's not stupid. He knows the Shadow broker is a valuable ally, turning on him doesn't make sense, not unless something huge was at stake. I don't know the details but the Shadow Broker hired a freelance mercenary to deal with it. A Krogan named Wrex."

"How do I find him?"

"I heard he was paying Citadel Security a visit. If you hurry you can catch him before he leaves the C-sec academy."

Alex raised her eyebrow, "Isn't it a little strange that a Krogan would visit C-Sec?"

"Vary." Barla Von agreed, "But somehow, I doubt the visit was entirely his choice. You'll have to speak with him if you want more information."

"Thanks for your help. Marcus, let's go."

* * *

><p>"Sergeant if you tell the Commander about this, I promise I'll see you busted to Private." Kaiden looked decidedly uncomfortable as the Asari wriggled up and down across his lap.<p>

Ashley giggled, "LT you should see the look on your face."

"Sergeant we have a job to do." He growled.

"I know LT, but have you looked around? The second we stepped through

that door everyone was looking at us. We kind of stand out in this place, wearing Alliance issued armor and such, but ever sense she started dancing no one's cared about us."

Kaiden looked around, trying hard to not look at the blue alien in front of him, only partially succeeding, she smiled when she caught sight of him looking. Ashley was right no one cared that two armed and armored Alliance soldiers were in the bar. That's when he noticed the newcomer, he was a disheveled man with three or four day's growth on his face.

He walked straight up to the bar and greeted a number of the people there by name, joking as he did so. He ordered a drink and sat down at a table, his eye's glancing over at an Asari dancer or two. "I think that might be our guy."

Ashley had seen the newcomer too, "I think you're right want to go say hi?"

The two soldiers stood up, "Thanks for the dance." Kaiden transferred a few more credits to the girl for her trouble, and they walked over to the newcomer.

"Hey there sweetie." He slurred, "You looking for some fun? 'Cause I gotta say the soldier getup looks really good on that bod of yours. Why don't you sit your sweet little ass down beside ol' Harkin? Have a drink, see where this goes."

Ashley wanted to puke, Harkin had to be the smelliest, foulest person she'd ever met, "I'd rather drink a cup of acid after chewing on a razor blade."

"You trying to hurt my feelings?" He smirked, "You gotta do better than that, after twenty years with C-Sec I've been called every name in the book, princess."

Kaiden had had enough. He grabbed Harkin by the collar and slammed his face to the table, "Talk to her like that again and you'll be picking your teeth up off the floor." He didn't yell, he didn't need to.

"Okay okay, just relax!" Kaiden let him sit up.

"We're looking for a C-Sec officer named Garrus."

"Garrus you say?" Harkin smirked again, "You must be part of Anderson's crew. Poor bastard's still trying to bring Saren down? I'll tell you where Garrus is, but first you gotta tell me something did the Captain let you in on his big secret?"

"We just need to know where Garrus is."

"But, it's all related don't you see? The Captain used to be a Specter. Didn't know that did you? It was all very hush hush, the first human ever given that honor, and then he blew it. Screwed up his mission so bad they kicked him out. Of course he blames Saren, say's the turian set him up."

"Why should we even believe a drunk like you?" Ashley asked.

Harkin shrugged, "Fine ask Anderson, I bet he tells you. He's too stupid and proud to lie right to your face."

"You said they covered all this up, how'd you hear about it?"

"I spent twenty years working cases here on the Citadel. People on this station love to talk, secrets are like herpes if you got 'im, you might as well spread them around."

"You're a pig." Ashely looked at him a look she reserved for cockroaches.

"Just noticed that now did you?"

"Why'd they kick him out?"

"I never hear any of the details, I bet it's a good story though, the hero's fall classic tragedy." Harkin laughed and sipped his drink.

"This isn't what we're here for Sargent." Kaiden looked at Harkin, "Just tell us where Garrus went."

"Garrus was sniffing around Dr. Michele's office, she runs a med clinic on the other side of the wards. Last I here he was going back there."

"Come on Ashley, let's go see if we can catch up to him."

"Yeah good go. Let me drink in peace."

"LT do you think what Harkin said was true?"

"I don't know Sargent, but I do know this, Harkin's an ass. I wouldn't put much stock in what he had to say."

"Yeah but think about what Saren said at the hearing, it sounded like they knew each other."

For once Kaiden didn't have anything to say.

7. Chapter 7

****A/N:** Alright so here it is the next chapter. I wanted this chapter to take us all the way through to meeting Tali. I've written it but It needs to be edited badly so hopefully I'll be able to update again some time soon in the next few days or so.******

****Enjoy! Please comment, review, and all that jazz.****

"Let's see if we can find this Wrex character." Alex and the Spartan stepped through the doors and into the C-Sec Academy.

"From what I understand of Krogan, shouldn't he be easy to find?" It was almost with irony that at Marcus' words they saw the Krogan. The alien was almost as tall as Marcus and weighed almost just as much. As the two soldiers approached they could overhear the C-Sec officer and the Krogan arguing.

"Witnesses saw you making threats in Fist's bar. Stay away from him."

The Krogan gave the human a look, "I don't take orders from you."

"This is your only warning Wrex."

The Krogan smirked, "You should warn Fist. I will kill him."

The officer was taken aback, "Do you want me to arrest you?"

The Krogan laughed, "I want you to try." Then he looked over and saw Shepard and Marcus. The two soldiers drew his attention especially the large one. He brushed past the officer.

"Go on, get out of here!"

"Do I know you human?"

Alex had a little smile, "I'm Commander Shepard. I'm trying to take down Saren, Barla Von said to talk to you."

The Krogan nodded in understanding, "Barla Von is a wise man; we may share the same goal human."

"Enlighten me."

"I've been hired to kill the owner of Chora's Den, a man named Fist. " The Krogan's eyes took on a hard edge, "He did something very foolish. A Quarian showed up here on the Citadel, she was on the run. She wanted to trade information for a safe place to hide, so she went to Fist. He promised to arrange a meeting between her and the Shadow Broker. Instead he contacted Saren."

"I'm guessing the Shadow Broker didn't take to kindly to that?"

"Fist is a greedy bastard, but he's not stupid. He wouldn't have betrayed the Shadow Broker unless Saren offered him a hell of a deal. Saren paid him a small fortune for the Quarian, he had to. She has evidence connecting him to the Geth."

"Commander we need to get that evidence."

"Agreed." The Commander looked over at Wrex, "Where's the Quarian now?"

"Last I heard, Fist still had her. Probably has her somewhere inside his club."

"Alright Wrex. You're coming with us."

The Krogan smiled, "My people have a saying, find the enemy of your enemy, and you will find a friend."

"I think we're going to get along just fine." Alex shook the Krogan's hand.

"Let's go I'd hate to keep Fist waiting."

"Lieutenant give me a status update."

* * *

><p>"This must be the place." Ashley tried the door to the clinic. The seen that greeted them was something every soldier and cop had nightmares about. Several armed men had the doctor pinned between them.<p>

"I didn't tell anyone I swear!"

"That was smart doc. Now you make sure to stay smart when Garrus comes around."

Ashley and Kaiden drew their weapons. Kaiden saw Garrus sneaking around behind the counter, somehow he'd managed to sneak in without the gunmen noticing. Then one of the gunmen noticed the two soldiers at the door.

"Who the hell are you?" One of the gunmen grabbed the doctor and spun her around using her as a human shield.

Garrus spun around from behind the counter pistol drawn, a single shot through the gunman's head saw Dr. Michele free. The doctor used the distraction to quickly duck behind cover. With the doctor free Kaiden used his biotics to pull one of the gunmen out from behind cover. The gunman was helpless as Garrus calmly picked him off.

Ashely's assault rifle barked and another of the gunmen dropped. They had shown up without armor, with no kinetic barriers, the gunmen were little threat to the soldiers. Garrus was relentless, he wielded his pistol with laser precision. Each shot he fired resulted in the death of another of the gunmen. Soon the blood and gore of all the gunman marked the walls. Ashley and Kaiden holstered their weapons approached Garrus and the doctor.

"Perfect timing you two. Gave me a clear shot at that bastard."

"That was a good shot Garrus."

The turian nodded at the complement, "Sometimes you get lucky." He looked over at the doctor, "Dr. Michele are you hurt?"

"No I'm okay, thanks to you all of you." She was clearly shaken. Garrus' expression softened at her discomfort.

"I know those men threatened you, but if you tell us who they worked for we can protect you." Kaiden said.

"They work for Fist. They wanted to shut me up, keep me from telling Garrus about the Quarian."

"Quarian?" Garrus asked.

"A few days ago a Quarian came into the clinic. She'd been shot, she wouldn't tell me by who. I could tell she was scared. She said she had information she wanted to trade for protection. So I put her in

contact with Fist."

Kaiden though for a bit, "Wait that doesn't make any sense. What would Saren have to do with her?"

"That's it!" Dr. Michele exclaimed, "She said the information she had had to do with Saren and the Geth."

"There's no way the Council can ignore this!" Garrus shouted triumphantly.

"We need to contact the Commander LT." Almost as if Ashley's words had summoned her, Alex's voice came in over their Omni-tools.

"Lieutenant, give me a status update."

"Commander we've tracked down Garrus, and we've got a possible lead. There's a Quarian--"

"Let me guess a Quarian that has information about Saren and the Geth." She interrupted.

"That's right Commander. How'd you know?"

Alex smirked, "Sounds like we've got the same information. How soon can you get back to Chora's Den?"

"Commander we just came from there."

"I know that's where Fist is. How soon can you get there?"

"We can be there in twenty minutes."

"Sounds good Lieutenant. Garrus, you ready to work?"

"Commander this is your show, but I want to take down Saren as much as you. I couldn't find the proof I needed during my investigation by I knew what was really going on, Saren's a traitor to the Council and a disgrace to my people!"

Back at the C-Sec Academy Marcus could see the predatory grin spread across Alex's face, "Welcome aboard Garrus."

"Fist is going to be waiting for us, when we hit him we better hit him hard."

Alex looked over at Marcus and Wrex, "I wouldn't worry about that."

* * *

><p>Alex and the team met up in the alleyway outside of Fist's bar. The music had stopped and an ominous silence had settled over the place.<p>

"This is the place Shepard." Wrex said.

"It looks shut down." Kaiden said.

"Alright team. What do you think?"

"Looks like they're expecting a fight Commander, I say we give it to them." Ashley grinned as she pulled her riffle.

"Chora's Den is a practically a fortress Commander. There's only one possible way in or out, and that's the front door." Garrus added.

Alex nodded, "Marcus what are your thoughts?"

"Me and Wrex hit the front door hard, we shoot anything that moves, Kaiden and Ashley right behind us. You and Garrus provide long range support. We clear the place room by room."

Alex nodded at Marcus' tactical appraisal, "Alright people let's do this."

The team moved out in quiet procession. There were two guards watching the front door. Two sniper shots from Alex and Garrus saw them removed from the team's way.

"What's your plan for the door Commander?" Garrus asked.

"Markus?"

"Yes ma'am." Marcus sprinted ahead of Wrex.

Twelve hundred pounds of Spartan moving at almost seventy kilometers an hour slammed into the front door of Chora's Den. The two panels of the door flew across the bar. Two of Fist's men behind the bar were crushed under the weight of the door. Marcus had replaced his MA5X assault rifle with a Covenant Storm Rifle. He had long learned on Eden Prime that the Covenant plasma weapons were much more effective than their UNSC counterparts. A shower of plasma bolts accompanied his dramatic entrance. Wrex and the rest of the team soon followed him through the opening he had created adding their fire to the confusion.

There were over a dozen guards, most were human and a few were Krogan like Wrex. Wrex's shotgun added to the cacophony and two more guards joined those that had already died. Marcus slammed up next to the bar, suddenly a guard popped up right across from him. He reached over and grabbed the man by his neck and slammed him to the ground. His plasma sword flashed into existence and he drove the blade into the man's skull killing him instantly.

Kaiden and Ashley quickly spread out behind the two heavy hitters. Kaiden caught one of Fist's men out in the open with his biotics. He threw the man back with enough force to stun him, a pair of shots from Kaiden's pistol followed and the man stayed down for good. Ashley's weapon fired on full automatic filling the club with fire, half a dozen men ducked behind cover which allowed the rest of the team to move into position.

Alex's and Garrus' sniper rifles spoke out, each report signaled the death of another of Fist's men. They were amassing an impressive body count, but Marcus knew that speed was of importance. Every moment spent bogged down in a fire fight, meant a greater chance of

something happening to the Quarian. He could see a pair of Krogan near the back door, each was armed with a shotgun.

He pulled a plasma grenade and primed it, "Take cover!" He side armed the grenade across the bar. The intense heat fusing it to the large bony crest of the lead Krogan. He cried out in pain and began flailing around, but the resulting explosion silenced him. The other Krogan has been caught in the explosion when he attempted to remove the grenade from his companion, nothing remained of those two except what was splattered across the walls and over the rest of Fist's men.

Marcus' Storm Rifle lashed out across the bar, its purple blue fire burned through the shields of Fist's men with laughable ease. The rest of the team added their fire to his, and soon the rest of Fist's men were put down.

"All target's down commander."

Marcus and Wrex stood up from their cover, "Damn, Shepard. You got some good friends." Wrex looked around at the carnage Marcus had wrought. "You must want Saren dead badly." Wrex had known that something was different about Marcus as soon as they had met. Marcus' armor might be a sealed environment, but a Krogan's sense of smell was not to be underestimated. He had scented Marcus on his armor the moment they had met and he knew something was different about the human in the strange armor.

"I chose the best and that's what I expect." She answered, "Come on people we're wasting time."

The team began moving to the back of the bar, Marcus and Wrex were in the lead again, when a pair of Fist's men came out of the door with their guns pointed directly at Marcus and Wrex. Marcus' shields could handle the direct fire from their primitive weapons, but Wrex was another story, with them caught out in the open like they were Wrex would stand no chance. Time slowed as Marcus' enhanced reflexes took over, he dove to the right. Wrex weighed almost a thousand pounds in his armor, but Marcus could move at incredible speeds if needed. He tackled Wrex to the ground, grabbing the edge of a table as he did so pulling it down on its side to provide some meager cover.

It was not needed however as Alex and the rest of the team opened fire. The two men never got a chance to fire as high velocity bullets tore into them. Marcus picked Wrex up as soon as the fire died down. The ease with which he lifted the big Krogan only confirmed Wrex's suspicions that Marcus was not normal.

"Wow, I don't think I've ever seen someone move that fast." Garrus commented.

"Marcus' armor is equipped with a new experimental motion tracker module which gives him greater tactical flexibility." Alex knew her excuse was full of holes, but it seemed to satisfy Garrus.

The team moved into the back room. As they moved in two contacts appeared on Marcus' motion tracker behind some crates, he leveled his rifle "Come out from behind there!"

Two men in a uniform of some kind came out from behind the crates,

"S- Stop right there." He held a gun.

"Warehouse workers? All the real guards must be dead." Garrus commented.

Alex smiled, which seemed to unnerve the two men, "Now might be a good time to find somewhere else to work."

"Uh . . . yeah, I never liked Fist anyway." The one holding the gun set it down and the two men ran out.

"It would have been quicker to just kill them." Wrex said.

"Killing people isn't always the answer. Looks like this is the last room Commander, how do you want to do this?" Garrus asked.

"We go in hard, but remember we need to take him alive. Garrus hack the door. The rest of you be ready to move as soon as the door opens."

Garrus and the rest of the team moved up to the door. He accessed his Omni-tool and began working on the door. Marcus took up position right next to the door, he switched to his plasma pistol. He didn't want to run the risk of a stray shot hitting Fist. "Get ready everyone." Garrus called out.

As soon as the doors opened Marcus rushed through. On the other side was a handsome office. Fine chairs and couches were set in a tasteful arrangement. A massive metal desk dominated the center of the room. A man that had to be Fist stood behind the desk.

"Why do I have to do ev-" Fist never got a chance to finish his sentence. Marcus reached across the desk and pulled Fist to the ground. Fist held a gun in his hand, Marcus twisted his wrist with an audible pop. Fist cried out in pain as his wrist broke and the gun fell to the ground.

"Wait don't kill me I surrender."

"Smart move Fist, now tell me where the Quarian is and I won't have my friend rip your arms off and beat you to death with them." Shepard gave Marcus a smile to let him know she was joking.

"She's not here. I don't know where she is that's the truth."

"He's no use to you now. Let me kill him." Wrex pulled his shotgun.

"Wait wait wait! I don't know where she is, but I know where you can find her. The Quarian isn't here said she'd only deal with the Shadow Broker himself."

"Face to face? Even I was hired through an agent!" Wrex growled.

"Nobody meets the Shadow Broker. Ever. Even I don't know his true identity. But she didn't know that. I told her I'd set a meeting up. When she gets there, it'll be Saren's men waiting for her." The thought of Saren getting away with what happened at Eden Prime twisted like a cold knife in his gut.

He wrenched Fist's arm, hard. "Where's the meeting taking place!"

"Here on the wards!" He cried, "She's supposed to meet them now you can make it if you hurry! It on the data pad!"

Marcus looked up and saw the data pad that Fist was refereeing to. He let go of Fist's arm and grabbed the pad. "I've got the location it's . . ." Marcus cursed and handed the pad to Shepard. The Citadel is an incredibly large place with a population of over thirteen million. The Wards were the cheapest housing available on the Citadel, therefor they were also the largest section of the Citadel. If Marcus was reading the map that Fist gave them correctly it meant that the meeting with the Quarian was taking place almost five kilometers away. Marcus could make it, but the rest of the team wouldn't make it in time.

"Marcus?"

"I can make it, Commander."

"I know, it's just that-"

"Commander, I can make it." Something in his voice must have convinced her, because she nodded.

"Alright then, let's-" She was interrupted by Wrex's shotgun.

"What the hell are you doing!" Garrus yelled.

"The Shadow Broker paid me to kill him. I don't leave jobs half done."

"Garrus, Saren killed a lot of people at Eden Prime, and Fist was going to help him get away with it, trust me he had it coming."

"I . . . see Commander."

"That said, Wrex, if you ever pull a stunt like that again I'll kill you myself, understand!"

Wrex grinned, Commander Shepard was the first person he actually believed was capable of carrying out that threat, "Yes Commander."

"Looks like we got company Commander." Kaiden called out. The team moved back out in warehouse. A number of men had moved back into the bar while Shepard and the team were taking care of Fist.

"Marcus, go. We got this."

"Yes Commander." Marcus smiled. He threw his storm rifle up over his shoulder at took off through the bar. Shouts of surprise followed him as several men tried to get a shot off, but Marcus was moving much too fast for them to follow.

Marcus focused on breathing and moving fast. The Wards were unfamiliar and full of twists and turns, one time he even made a wrong turn that led to a dead end. As a Spartan, Marcus, could far

outpace a normal human, and he could reach a top speed of sixty-nine kilometers an hour, but it did him little good in these twists and turns. Suddenly he entered a long hallway, the nav marker leading to the meeting was strait a head. He poured on the speed.

8. Chapter 8

****A/N:** Hey everyone I know its been a while. Sorry about that. I haven't dropped the story, but between family and work, it's taken a lot longer than I expected to write on this project. I'm not giving up on it so don't worry. Please as always comments and concerns are appreciated.**

****UPDATE:** I fixed some parts that I had some problem's with. I hate the way Shepard talks about the Reapers in the first game sometimes. Please re-read and let me know what you all think. I'll be fixing the earlier chapters as well so check in.**

* * *

><p>Tali was scared and nervous. She had been on the Citadel less than a week and she had already been shot, gotten herself involved with a Specter, and was now waiting to meet one the most enigmatic individuals in the galaxy: the Shadow Broker.<p>

When she had first learned of the Geth she hadn't believed it at first, but when rumors became too numerous to be coincidence she decided to investigate. She had no idea where that decision would lead her and her people. She subconsciously rubbed her arm where the bullet had stuck her just a short time ago.

She had arrived at the proposed meeting place early, and had spent the time learning the ins and outs of the alley she found herself in. Her search was not promising there were a few side alleys, but all were dead ends. There was only one place in or out and that was down the main alley she was standing in.

Suddenly a group of Salarians led by a single turian walked down the steps and into the alley. The Salarians began spreading out and the turian walked up to her. Something about the way they moved set Tali's nerves on edge.

"Where's the Shadow Broker? Where's Fist?"

"They'll be here. Did you bring the data?" He ran his talons up and down her side sending shivers up her spine.

She slapped his hand away, "No way. The deal's off." Something about the look the turian gave her had unnerved her. She made to leave when she noticed the Salarians were pulling their weapons. Ever since her encounter with the sniper on the presidium she had decided to prepare a couple surprises in case she ran into more of Saren's men.

She wasn't able allowed to purchase, or even carry grenades, on the Citadel. Because she was a Quarian, she didn't have the same rights of the other Citadel races, but Tali was resourceful. A power source combined with a little bit of Eezo and you get pretty impressive high yield explosive.

She threw the device at the group of Salarrians. A number dove for cover but a few were caught in the explosion buying her a few precious moments to duck behind cover. She grabbed her pistol, it was a small thing but it was all she had. She snuck a quick look across the alley and saw almost a dozen Salarrians with guns, and one really pissed off Turian. The look he gave her sent shivers down her spine. She ducked back down when high velocity rounds struck the crate in front of her head.

She wondered how she was going to get out of this one.

* * *

><p>Marcus heard an explosion as he reached the top of the stairs. He saw the Quarrian duck behind some crates as a squad of Salarrians and a Turian closed in. He noted the scorched floor panels and a pair of Salarrian bodies, the Quarrian wasn't about to give up with a fight.<p>

Marcus felt a predatory grin spread across his face as he launched himself at full speed from the top of the stairway. He landed between the Quarrian and the Saren's men denting the floor plates. The turian in the lead stumbled backwards out of Marcus' way.

"Who the hell-" He never got a chance to finish as Marcus' fist smashed into his brow plate, splitting it. The turian flew back into the Salarrians, his lifeless body knocking them down. The Salarrians were stunned.

Sloppy. He thought. He pulled his pistol from his hip and began firing as he sprinted to his right. His goal was to keep the Salarrians attention on him and off the Quarrian as he dealt with them. He snapped off a pair of shots killing two of the Salarrians. His fire broke the others out of their stupor. Some went and ducked for cover while others tried to raise their own weapons. Marcus' pistol flashed out again and another green orb of plasma burned into helmet of a Salarrian.

Marcus dove behind a pile of crates to his right. He used the few moments to cycle the heat sinks on his pistol. As soon as it was safe to operate again he transferred to his Storm Rifle. He heard a pair of shots he looked over just in time to see the Quarrian put another two rounds into the back of one of Salarrians head at almost point black range.

* * *

><p>Tali didn't know what was happeneing. A few moments ago she would have given her odds slim to none at best. Then all of the sudden out of nowhere a man in blue and grey armor quite literally comes flying in.<p>

She's never seen anyone move so fast, before she could register the fact that he was even there, the Turian and two Salarrians were lying dead in the alley. The Salarrians looked just as confused as she did. Several of them jumped behind cover while others tried to fire on the new arrival. Suddenly a third body joined the two on the floor.

Tali didn't know what to make of the new arrival, but she didn't really care. If the man was willing to kill Saren's men she wouldn't

complain. As he ducked behind cover a pair of Salarians stood up to try and engage the new arrival, exposing their backs to her. She didn't waste the opportunity squeezed off a pair of rounds like her father had shone her so many months ago.

Marcus grinned as he saw the confusion spread amongst the remaining Salarians as they realized their original target was still there, and still very lethal. A few turned back to engage the Quarian and others ducked behind cover again. Marcus unleashed his Storm Rifle on those too stupid to jump behind cover and cut them down. Between the Spartan and the Quarian, the Salarians were quickly finished and cut down.

After the last Marcus, finished off the last Salarian he jumped up from cover and walked over to the Quarian, "Are you hurt?"

"No, I'm fine. Those were Saren's men." It wasn't a question.

"Correct."

"Damn it! First set me up I knew I shouldn't have trusted him." She paused for a bit, "Not that I don't appreciate the help, but who are you?"

"My name is Marcus, I'm with Commander Shepard of the Alliance. We're looking for information connecting Saren and the Geth."

Tali couldn't see the man's face, she guess he was human, but he was far larger than she had ever been led to believe a human could ever be. That said, she was quite accustomed to picking up body language though, she could tell that he wasn't about to hurt her, and that he was quite anxious to leave. "Then I can repay you, but not here."

"Commander, I have the Quarian." He called out over his com.

* * *

><p>"They're trying to flank us! Garrus. Wrex. Shift your fire to the left!" Alex called out. This wasn't the worse fire fight she had been in, but it was definitely up there. The problem was that the center of Chora's Den was a large bar that had blocked line of sight, and there was very little cover on the outside. If she and her team aren't careful Saren's men will cut them all to pieces.<p>

Garrus and Wrex, against all odds, were a perfect combination. Wrex would close in fast with the enemy with his shotgun. If the enemy tried to engage him while he was on the run, they exposed themselves to Garrus' covering fire. If they waited for the big Krogan to get in close before showing themselves the results were predictably graphic.

Alex slowly lead her team counter-clockwise around the bar. It was slow going but eventually the return fire stopped as Alex and her team finished off Saren's men.

"Squad check. Everyone all right?" Alex called out. As the team called out their status she gritted her teeth at the fact that one of her team was missing. "Alright every one let's move out! We still

need to get to that Quarian!"

"Commander, I have the Quarian"

"Marcus, what's your status?" Alex said with relief.

"We're fine, but a quick extraction would be preferred."

"Roger that. We'll get something set up." She looked at Garrus, "Any suggestions?"

"I can have a C-Sec officer pick them up and bring them to the embassies. I have a few friends that won't ask questions."

"Do it. You get that Marcus?"

"Yes, sir. Give us a rendezvous point and I'll get her there."

"Wait one Marcus." A few moments later Alex gave Marcus the coordinates to meet with the C-Sec officer. "Alright Marcus, get the Quarian to the embesies and we'll meet up there."

* * *

><p>"You know the last time I was up here on the Presidium, I was shot?" Tali asked.<p>

"Don't worry. I'll make sure nothing happens." Marcus looked over at the Quarian as they walked. She had to be young, that said though she had handled herself pretty well in the fight against Saren's men. "Was this your first fire fight?"

She paused for a bit, "Yes it was."

"Those men would have done a lot worse to you if they had gotten a hold of you." Marcus looked over at her.

"I know, but that's not what bothers me. Specters are supposed to be the direct hand of the Council, this data I have shows that Saren's the worst kind of traitor."

Marcus didn't know what to say. Throughout his whole life all he's known is war, for the most part humanity was united in the war against the Covenant and afterwards. "Yes, but as bad as Saren is there are even better people working to take him down."

Tali smiled, "Like you and Commander Shepard?"

"Yes." A few moments later Marcus lead Tali to the Ambassador's office. Alex and the entire team were there, so were Ambassador Udina and Captain Anderson.

"You're not making my life easy, Shepard. Firefights in the Wards? An all-out assault on Chora's Den do you know how many-" He looked over at Marcus and Tali as they came in, "What's this? A Quarian? What are you up to Shepard?"

"Making your day Ambassador. She has information linking Saren to the Geth." Alex couldn't keep the smirk off her face."

"Really?" Udina raised an eyebrow, "Maybe you better start at the beginning. Miss-?"

"My name is Tali. Tali'Zorah nar Rayya-"

"We don't see many Quarians here. Why did you leave the flotilla?"

Tali kept her frustration in check as the Ambassador interrupted her. She was used to being treated like this, "I was on my pilgrimage. My rite of passage into adulthood."

"I've never heard of this" Alex said.

"It is a tradition among my people. When we reach maturity, we leave the ships of our parents and our people behind. Alone, we search the stars, only returning to the flotilla one we have discovered something of value. In this way we prove ourselves worthy of adulthood. It could be food or fuel. Or some type of useful technology. Or even knowledge that will make life easier on the flotilla. Through our Pilgrimage, we prove that we will contribute to the community, rather than be a burden on our limited resources."

Alex nodded at her explanation, "Tell us what you found."

"During my travels I began hearing reports of Geth. Since they drove my people into exile, the Geth have never traveled beyond the Veil. I was curious. I tracked a patrol of Geth to an uncharted world. I waited for one to become separated from its unit. Then I disabled it and removed its memory core."

"I thought the Geth fried their memory cores when they died. Some kind of defense mechanism?" Anderson asked.

"How did you manage to preserve the memory core?" Alex asked.

"My people created the Geth. If your quick, careful, and lucky small catches of data can sometimes be saved. Most of the core was wiped clean, but I managed to salvage something from its audio banks." Tali explained. She activated her Omni-Tool and pulled u the relevant audio file.

"_Eden Prime was a major victory! The beacon has brought us one step closer to finding the Conduit."_

Anderson's eye's widened, "That's Saren's voice. This proves he was involved in the attack!"

Alex grinned, "There's no way the Council can ignore this!"

"Wait. . . there's more. Saren wasn't working alone." Tali said. She fiddled with her Omni-Tool again.

"_Eden Prime was a major victory! The beacon has brought us one step closer to finding the Conduit."_

"_And one step closer to the return on the Reapers."_

"I don't recognize that other voice. The one talking about Reapers."

Udina commented.

"Are they some kind of alien species?" Alex asked.

"According the memory core, the Reapers were a hyper-advanced machine race that existed 50,000 years ago. The Reapers hunted the Protheans to total extinction, and then they vanished. At least that's what the Geth believe." Tali explained.

"Sounds a little far-fetched." Udina sounded skeptical.

Alex felt a sudden pain between her eyes. The nightmare of the beacon returned to her, only clearer. She saw people running, screaming. Something large and black rose up in the distance and the world erupted in flame.

"Commander are you alright?" Marcus whispered. His enhanced hearing could pick up her quickened breathing. He could see her bio metric data from the hard wire in her suit. her pulse was racing and her blood pressure had spiked.

"I'm fine." She gritted, then louder she asked, "What's the connection between the Geth and these Reapers?"

Tali looked at Alex, "The Geth revere the Reapers a gods, the pinnacle of non-organic life. And they believe Saren knows how to bring the Reapers back."

Udina shock his head, "The Council is going to love this."

"Udina it doesn't matter what the Council thinks about the Reapers, we have proof that Saren attacked Eden Prime, they'll have to act."

"The Commander's right. We need to present this to the Council right away." Anderson said.

"You're right Captain, Apologies Commander. I'll contact the Council immediately." Alex blinked she had never heard of Udina apologizing to anyone.

"What about Tali commander? I saw her in the alley she could prove to be useful." Marcus asked.

"Let me come with you Commander."

"I thought you were on your Pilgrimage?" Alex asked Tali.

"The Pilgrimage proves we are willing to give of ourselves of the greater good. What does it say about me if I turn my back on this?"

Alex smiled ate her attitude, "I'll take all the help I can get."

"Thanks you won't regret this."

Udina nodded, "Anderson and I will go ahead and get things ready with the Council. Take a few minutes to collect yourselves and meet us in the Tower." Udina and Captain Anderson walked out of the

office.

Alex looked over at Tali, "I'm Commander Shepared. It's good to meet you."

"Thank you Commander. It's good to meet you too." Tali looked over at Marcus, "Thanks to the Marcus, otherwise Saren's men would have gotten me."

Alex smiled, "Marcus is a great soldier, if he thinks you're good enough to have on our team, there's no way I can argue with that." She looked over at the rest of the team. "Alright guys, lets go see the Council."

The whole team growled their agreement.

9. Chapter 9

****A/N: Okay so let's try this again. For some reason the chapter didn't post. Anyway here it is the next chapter of The Alliance's Spartan. As always please review and comment.****

* * *

><p>Ariel's form turned and faced The door to the opps room as Admiral Hackett entered. "Thank you for accepting my invitation Admiral. I apologize that I couldn't meet you in person when you came on board, but there are very few places that my avatar can exist. Welcome aboard the Pride of Vengeance."<p>

"That's quite alright Ariel. Thank you for inviting be on board your ship. It's quite impressive."

"I'll get right to it Admiral, Marcus and I need help getting the Pride back in fighting shape."

Hackett nodded in understanding. When his old friend Captain Anderson had filed him on the UNSC frigate, Hackett had figured something like this might be coming his way. "Alright. What do you need? I can't guarantee anything, but if it's in my authority, I'll give you what ever you need."

"Thank you for your candor." Ariel waved her arm over to the holographic projector and called up a picture of the Pride. "In the universe were Marcus and I come from, the UNSC never developed mass effect technology as such our FTL technology developed along a completely different line of thinking. The Shaw-Fujikawa Translight Engine allows us to travel faster than the speed of light by allowing ships to cross over a dimensional barrier into slipspace, where the laws of physics are slightly skewed in our favor. Now allow me to apologize in advice for this Admiral, but I've hacked into the Alliance Military Network, and it seems that our slipspace drive is more efficient to your conventional mass effect core's when making FLT jumps, however when combined with the utility of the Mass Relays your mass effect core's blow the Shaw-Fujikawa out of the water."

Hackett didn't even blink at the mention that Ariel had hacked into the AMN, if she had asked him for clearance he'd have given it to

her, he was surprised that she apologized though. "So what are you saying?"

"Based off the astrological data that you've provided me with, if the Pride were to try and reach the Earth of this universe under our slipspace drive, the voyage would take almost two weeks, but by using a Mass Relay you could make the same trip in a little under three days."

"You want a mass effect core for the Pride." Hackett surmised.

"That is correct Admiral. I've analyzed that data from the incident that brought us here. I believe that the construct Marcus and I found in our universe was some form of mass relay. I have no idea who built it, but the evidence is clear, the gravimetric anomalies we encountered can only be caused by element zero. I believe that the element zero was not to blame for the power surge that caused the slipspace drive to malfunction, but rather the installation itself. My guess is that when we approached we triggered some kind of automated guidance system that was supposed to guide us into the relay. Instead it caused a cascading power surge. I now know that if the slipspace generators hadn't malfunctioned everyone on board would have been killed. If the relay had had the chance to accelerate us as it intended, our inertial compensators would have failed and everyone on board would have been killed. With an element zero core and your inertial compensators the Pride's combat maneuverability would skyrocket. Marcus needs every edge he can get."

Admiral Hackett thought for a moment, "I see your point Ariel, unfortunately devoting so many resources without clearance from the defense committee is beyond my authority. I can submit your request, but it might take them a while before they make any decision, and they might not even agree to your request."

Ariel took a few moments to process the Admiral's words. In reality it only took a few nanoseconds, but she had always attempted to appear more human even if she was nothing more than a figure of coalesced light particles at the moment. "That's what I was afraid of. Admiral Hackett I have a proposition for the Alliance and I want you to bring it to the Defense Committee."

Hackett was taken aback at the AI's words, "I'm listening."

Ariel smiled, she felt a tinge of satisfaction at the Admiral's look, she had him. "These documents here," she waved her arm and a group of legal documents appeared on the holographic emitter, "legally establishes 'Spartan Industries' as a privately owned research and development group based on a planet called Noveria. Which is outside the Council's jurisdiction. Don't worry I've made them impervious to any form of scrutiny." A small smile spread across her face at the look of surprise on the Admiral's face. "What I propose is this, the Alliance will provide funding to Spartan Industries, and in return Spartan Industries will provide the Alliance with the first opportunity to purchase a number of military and civilian technologies."

"What?!" Hackett was shocked.

"That's right Admiral. In order for me to carry out my directives I need an infrastructure. To do that I need money. Which means I need

to trade something of value. The only thing of value I have are the technologies on board this ship. I'll do what ever it takes to make sure that my Spartan has what ever he needs to complete his mission."

Hackett's eyes narrowed, "And what exactly is his mission?"

"That's easy, to defend humanity. No matter the cost."

"And what would happen if the Defense Committee were to turn down your request for funding?"

"Then I'd have to look else where, Admiral."

"And how would that be in line with your mandate to help Marcus defend humanity. If you sell your technologies to the highest bidder your little more than a war monger!"

"I wouldn't sell any military technologies, but the civilian technologies should be able to provide me with enough credits to at least get me started."

Hackett fumed for a few moments. All his life he had fought for humanity, if he had half a chance of destroying this ship and the AI on board he'd take it, but he didn't. When his fleet had arrived in system, the first thing had ordered was a systematic sweep of the system. The whole fleet had searched high and low for any Geth left in the system. He had also privately asked his captains to keep an eye out of for the Pride. They hadn't found any sign of the Pride. When the drop ship brought him to the coordinates her couldn't even see her until she had dropped her cloak for the few moments it took for him to dock. Finally he looked over at her.

"What did you have in mind?" He asked.

* * *

><p>Commander Shepard, could you spare a moment of your time?"<p>

Alex looked over at the elderly gentleman. She and the team had just left the embassy offices and were on the way to the top of the Citadel tower when the man stopped her. She walked over to him.

"Commander Shepard, my name is Samesh Bhatia. Forgive the intrusion, but I have no where else to turn."

Alex didn't have a whole lot of time, but something about the man's pleading voice made her stop, "What seems to be the problem?"

His eye's lit up with relief when she answered him, "My wife was a marine. She was in the two twelve on Eden Prime. I've requested that my wife's body be returned to me for cremation, but the military has refused my request."

"Wait a minute, did you say Bhatia, as in Nirali Bhatia?" Ashley asked.

"Yes, that's her, that's my wife."

Marcus looked over at Ashley, she had a look in her eye's. A look he had seen a number of times.

"I'm sorry sir, I new Nirali. My name's Ashley Williams I served with Nirali in her unit on Eden Prime. She spoke of you often. She loved you very much." Now Marcus understood. It's always hard to see your friends die.

"Thank you." Shamesh bowed his head in grief.

Alex looked over at the him, "Why did they refuse your request?" she asked. "There's got to be a reason."

"I don't know." He shook his head, "All I know is that they have declared it impossible for my wife to be returned to me."

Alex though for a moment, "There's no reason for your wife's body to not be returned to you. Unfortunately I have business in the Citadel Tower, but I'll make sure this get's taken care of."

"Thank you Commander Shepard."

"Ashley. Marcus."

"Yes ma'am." Marcus looked over at Shepard.

"I don't need to tell you this, but Nirali was one of ours, bring her home. I'm going on to the see the Council."

"Aye, aye." Ashley said.

As the rest of the team moved on and Marcus and Ashley approached Mr. Bhatia.

"Thank you for your help."

"Don't mention it, Nirali was my friend too."

"The man in charge of my case is Mr. Bosker. When I last saw him, he was the expensive bar over there."

Marcus turned and looked over at Ashley as the rest of the team walked on to see the Council. "How do you want to do this?"

"I don't know Marcus, I've never had to deal with civilians like this. Normally the officer handles this kind of stuff."

Marcus nodded in understanding, "You want me to handle this then?"

Ashley thought for a moment, "No. I'll take care of this. We take care of our own."

* * *

><p>"You wanted proof? There it is." Udina couldn't help but have a satisfied grin plastered on his face.<p>

"Your evidence is irrefutable, Ambassador. Saren will be stripped of

his Spectre status and all efforts will be made to bring him in to answer to his crimes." That was the one thing that Alex always liked about the turians of Palaven, their honor was beyond question. If one of them turned traitor, the rest threw him to the wolves, and usually the wolves were the rest of their own kind.

The Asari councilor looked over at the others, "I recognize the other voice, the one speaking with Saren. Matriarch Benezia."

"Who's she?" Alex asked.

"Matriarchs are powerful Asari that have entered the final stage of their lives. They are our leaders and councilors. Matriarch Benezia is a powerful biotic and she had many followers. She will make a formidable ally for Saren."

"I'm more interested in the Reapers, what do you know about them?" The Salarian councilor asked.

"Only what was extracted by the Geth's memory core. The Reapers were an ancient race of machines that wiped out the Protheans then they vanished." Anderson answered.

"The Geth revere them as gods, and they believe that Saren's the prophet for their return." Alex continued.

"We think the Conduit is the key to bringing them back. Saren's searching for it. That's why he attacked Eden Prime."

The Salarian councilor thought for a moment before he continued, "Do we even know what this Conduit is?"

Alex shook her head, "No Councilor, but Saren's searching for it." Another flash went through her mind from the beacon, "And that gives us a place to start looking."

"Listen to what you're saying! Saren wants to bring back the machines that wipes out all life in the galaxy? Impossible, it has to be. Where did the Reapers go? Why did they vanish? How come we've found no trace of their existence? If they were real we'd have found something!" The Turian councilor sounded like he thought the whole thing was nonsense.

"Maybe." Alex agreed.

"What about Saren?" Udina fumed, "You can't just ignore a rouge Spectre!"

"Saren is a fugitive on the run for his life. He no longer has the rights or resources of a Specter, and every effort is being made to make him answer for his crimes."

"That's not good enough! You know he's hiding somewhere in the Traverse. Send your fleet in!" Udina cried.

"A fleet cannot search for one man." The Salarian Councilor sounded like he was trying to explain something to a toddler.

"A citadel fleet could secure the entire region. Keep the Geth from attacking any more of our colonies."

"Or it could start a war with the Terminus systems! We will not risk open war for a few human colonies."

Alex felt a spike of anger go through her, "You've always held humanity back!"

"Shepard's right!" Shepard looked at Udina, surprised that he would agree with her so vehemently, "I'm tired of this Council and it's anti-human bull-"

"Ambassador please." The Asari councilor looked decidedly uncomfortable. Apparently Udina was about to strike a nerve, one the Council didn't want exposed. "There is a way to track Saren down without the use of fleets or armies."

Alex heard Udina draw in a breath.

"No! It's too soon."

Alex locked eye's with the Turian Councilor, "It was a turian, a Turian Spectre that betrayed this Council, and it was a human that exposed him! I've earned this!"

He looked away. The Councilors all shared a look, finally the Asari councilor looked across at Alex, "Commander Shepard-Step forward."

* * *

><p>"Are you Mr. Bosker?" Ashley asked.<p>

The young man turned around at her question. He was wearing a nice business suit, and had a small glass in his hand. "Yes I am. Who are you?"

"My name's Ashley Williams, I'm a sergeant in the Alliance military."

"A pleasure to meet you Ms. Williams."

"What can I do for you?" He asked.

Marcus watched from the far side of the bar. He and Ashley had decided that she would be the one to talk Mr. Bosker, while he stood back and tried to stay out of sight. His enhanced hearing allowed him to pick up their conversation clearly. He had removed his helmet in an attempt to try and not look conspicuous.

All the sudden a young and very attractive woman joined him at the bar. She was wearing a form fitting dress that showed off her curves nicely. She moved with an easy grace and gave him a smile. "Hello Marcus."

Marcus looked at the woman as her smile broadened to show more teeth, "Who are you?"

"My name is Miranda, my boss has an opportunity he'd like to discuss with you."

"Not interested." Marcus replied.

"That's a shame." She gave him a sad look, "My boss thought that you and he were in the same line of work."

Marcus knew he should ask, but he did anyway, "And what line of work is that?"

"I'd have thought that was obvious, to strengthen and defend humanity at all costs."

Marcus looked over at her and raised an eyebrow, "What do you mean?"

She pulled out her Omni-tool and brought up some footage. Marcus soon realized it was the footage from the assault on Chora's Den. It clearly showed him fighting and killing his way through the bar. Then it fast-forward to him in the alley killing Saren's men. "Let's not play any games Marcus." She had a sweet seductive smile on her lips, "My boss thinks very highly of you. He'd like to make your acquaintance. He runs a small privately funded group that's dedicated to the advancement of human interests. He believes that you'd be a valuable asset."

Marcus didn't know what it was that Miranda wanted, but something about the way she spoke set him on edge. "Like I said, I'm not interested."

"Very well, Marcus. Should you change your mind however you may leave a message here. We'll receive it and get back in touch with you." She handed him a small business card. On one side was a strange gold and black symbol on the other was an extranet address.

When Marcus looked up Miranda had left. He hadn't even heard her move away. He took the card and set it in one of his empty ammo pouches. He looked over to see Ashley storming his way. She looked pissed enough to chew out a bulkhead.

"How did it go?" He asked

"I'd rather not talk about it."

Marcus put his hand on her shoulder, "Do you want me to talk to him?"

Ashley looked into his eyes he could see the grief in them, "She was my friend Marcus, she deserves better than this, and that asshole shut me down damn it!"

"What's going on?"

"He said something about her body being used for testing. Something about her wounds being caused by something they've never seen before." She took a deep breath, "Then he gave me this crap about how she'll end up saving more lives in death than she ever did while she was alive! That's crap!"

Marcus nodded in understanding. "I'll handle this."

Marcus put his helmet back on and walked over to Mr. Bosker. "Sir, we need to talk."

"Look, I told you-" He stopped talking as soon as he turned and faced Marcus. His mouth was slightly open at the shock of seeing a Spartan in full armor.

"My name is Marcus, I work with the Alliance." Marcus held out his hand.

Mr. Bosker slowly reached out to shake it, and Marcus closed his grip like a vise, crushing the man's hand. Forcing him to cry out in pain. The other patron's in the bar flinched back at the sound of Mr. Bosker's finger bones snapping.

"Mr., Bosker, Alliance military code 15, subsection D, paragraph 6, states that should the Alliance wish to test the remains of it's fallen soldier's written authorization must be obtained from the next of kin before any testing can begin. Now I know that Mr. Bhatia has made his desire to bury his wife known. If you refuse his request, not only will I break every bone in this hand, but I will personally see to it that you are arrested and charged. After that I will go find her body and bring her home myself, am I understood?" Marcus never raised his voice but he knew everyone in the bar heard him and his accusations. Mr. Bosker was on his knees know in the middle of the bar.

"Alright, alright!" He cried.

"Good." Marcus let go of the man's hand. His twisted fingers were splayed in a number of different directions. He casually walked back over to Ashley and motioned for her to join him as he headed for the door.

"Marcus, was all that real?" she asked.

"Was what real?"

"All that nonsense about subsections and paragraphs?"

"Every word. I might have glossed over the part that the Alliance has fifteen days before they are legally obligated to return the body, but I figured that the point was moot at that point."

"Wait." She stopped dead in her tracks, "How did you even know that?"

"Before I came on board the Normandy I had Ariel download any relevant data she could on the Alliance from your data banks. When I found the Alliance Military Code I memorized every word in case a situation might arrive when I needed it."

"You memorized the entire Alliance Military Code? It's like seventy pages long!" Marcus could tell she was shocked.

"Seventy-two actually." Marcus watched the grin spread across Ashley's face. "Come on let's tell Mr. Bhatia the good news then go find the Commander and see what the Council has decided."

* * *

><p>Marcus and Ashley stepped off the elevator to the top level of

the Citadel Tower. They didn't have to go far before they found Alex, Captain Anderson, and the rest. Marcus guessed by the look on Alex's face the council must have finally relented.<p>

"Commander." He nodded to her.

"Marcus, Ashley, how'd it go?"

"No way ma'am. Not until you let us in on what happened." Ashley retorted.

"The Commander here has been named the first ever Human Spectre." Captain Anderson answered for her.

"Congratulations, ma'am."

"Thank's Ashley, but Saren's got a hell of a head start on us. If we're going to catch up to him, we need to move fast."

"So we're going after Saren then ma'am?"

"That's right Marcus." She looked over at the rest of the group, "All of you are welcome to come with us. I'm going to need all the help I can get, and you've all proven yourselves. Meet back up on the Normandy in three hours if you want to join us."

* * *

><p> AN: Hey guy's I'd like some feed back on my writing style. Please PM me those who do will be able to make suggestions for the next Chapter. **

10. Update

**Hey folks. Soran here. **

**Wow its been a long time hasn't it. I have a couple of updates I want to put here, and then I want to get back to work. First off no I am not dead. Do I plan on continuing The Alliance's Spartan, yes I do. Am I currently working on it, as soon as I get done here. The first thing I plan on doing is updating all the previous Chapters. There were a couple of things I didn't like about how I was writing the story and hopefully it won't take to long to correct. To all of you that have been with me from the beginning, thank you so much for your patience for those of you that found my story during that eight month period of hell that was my life until a few weeks ago, I promise I won't do this again. Turns out starting a new career and working 60+ hours a week plus having a kid and trying to renovate a house all at the same time means there's not a whole lot of time left for writing, but most of that's done now so here I am.**

**So stay tuned people, here we go. . . Again**

End
file.